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Agatha Christie's

MURDER AT THE VICARAGE

Dramatized by
MOIE CHARLES
&
BARBARA TOY

[redacted]

Samuel
French

Director	[redacted] [redacted]	[redacted]
Producer	[redacted] [redacted]	[redacted]
		[redacted]
Script Assistant	[redacted] [redacted]	[redacted]

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SAMUEL FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

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MURDER AT THE VICARAGE

Produced at the Playhouse Theatre, London, on December 16th, 1949, with the following cast of characters :

(*in the order of their appearance*)

THE VICAR (*the Rev. Leonard Clement*)	*Jack Lambert*	[redacted]
GRISELDA (*his wife*)	*Genine Graham*	[redacted]
DENNIS (*his nephew*)	*Michael Newell*	[redacted]
MARY (*the maid*)	*Betty Sinclair*	[redacted]
RONALD HAWES (*the curate*)	*Michael Darbyshire*	[redacted]
LETTICE PROTHEROE	*Andrea Lea*	[redacted]
MISS MARPLE	*Barbara Mullen*	[redacted]
MRS PRICE RIDLEY	*Mildred Cottell*	[redacted]
ANNE PROTHEROE	*Alvys Maben*	[redacted]
LAWRENCE REDDING (*an artist*)	*Reginald Tate*	[redacted]
DR JOHN HAYDOCK	*Francis Roberts*	[redacted]
INSPECTOR SLACK	*Stanley Van Beers*	[redacted]
POLICE CONSTABLE JENNINGS		[redacted]

Play Directed by Reginald Tate.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play passes in the study of a vicarage in the country, at the present time.

ACT I

SCENE 1—A Tuesday in Summer. Afternoon.
SCENE 2—The following day. 6-45 p.m.
SCENE 3—Thursday morning.

ACT II

SCENE 1—The following Sunday. Late afternoon.
SCENE 2—An hour and a half later.

MURDER AT THE VICARAGE

ACT I

SCENE 1

SCENE.—*The study of the Vicarage in a country village. A Tuesday in Summer. Afternoon.*

The study is a pleasant, light room, notwithstanding bookcases of heavy books and the fact that it is always untidy. French windows R.C. *of the back wall lead across a verandah to the garden. A door* L. *leads to the entrance hall and other parts of the house. The fireplace is* R. *The wall* L. *of the french windows is deeply recessed and lined with book-cases. The recess contains the Vicar's desk which is out of sight from the french windows. A swivel chair stands below the desk, which has a telephone on the* R. *end of it. A waste-paper basket stands* R. *of the desk. A tall bureau-bookcase stands below the door* L. *A large comfortable sofa with a chintz cover stands* R.C. *with a large easy chair to match it below the fireplace. A drinks cabinet with a table-lamp on it, stands against the back wall* R. *of the french windows. There is a small rectangular table above the sofa. A gate-legged table stands* C., *with two small Regency chairs above it, a small Regency chair* R. *of it and a Regency elbow chair* L. *of it. A small tub armchair stands down* L. *There is a pedestal table with a large plant in a brass bowl on it,* L. *of the french windows. A tea-trolley stands* L. *of the pedestal table. Long curtains hang each side of the french windows and the floor is carpeted, with Persian rugs below the sofa and* R. *of the door* L. *Several oil paintings and pictures of college groups hang on the walls, and there is a pair of electric candle brackets above the mantelpiece. A rowing oar decorates the* L. *wall above the bookcase, on which stand several silver cups and ornaments. A bag of golf clubs, and a hockey stick are propped in a corner. A wicker chair stands on the verandah and a hall-stand outside the door* L. *carries the Vicar's cassock and sash, the Vicar's raincoat and Hawes' cassock and sash. From the french windows a path runs around the Vicarage, leading* R. *to the church and Haydock's house, and* L. *to Miss Marple's house, the village and the Hall. The studio is across the garden to* L.

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play.*)

When the CURTAIN *rises, it is a bright summer day and the french windows stand open. The gate-legged table is set for lunch. The* VICAR, *the* REV. LEONARD CLEMENT, *is seated* L. *of the table. He is a charming, rather vague man in his late forties. He has just finished carving and serving the meat.* DENNIS, *the* VICAR'S *healthy, sixteen-year-old nephew, is seated above the table at the* R. *end.* RONALD HAWES, *the curate, is seated* R. *of the table. He is a pale-faced, nervous young man with an unctuous manner, and given to stuttering.* GRISELDA, *the* VICAR'S *pretty young wife, is seated above the table,* L. *of* DENNIS. MARY, *the good-natured but untidy maid, stands above the* L. *corner of the table She has a dish of greens in one hand and a dish of potatoes in the other. The four at the table have their heads bowed, and wait for the* VICAR *to say Grace. The proceedings are held up by a sneeze from* MARY.

ON

VICAR. " For what we are about to receive . . . "

(MARY *sneezes again.*)

" For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen."

(MARY *thrusts the dish of potatoes under the* VICAR'S *right elbow.*)

MARY. 'Taters. (*She dumps the dish of potatoes on to the centre of the table.*) Dumplings is under the beef. (*She moves to the up* R. *corner of the table.*)

VICAR. Thank you, Mary. I can feel them. (*He serves* DENNIS *with some dumplings.*)

MARY (*dumping the dish of greens on to the table in front of* HAWES). Greens. (*To* HAWES.) Go on—" have a go". Good for you.

VICAR. This beef is rather tough, Griselda.

(DENNIS *helps himself to potatoes.* HAWES *helps himself to greens, then passes them to* GRISELDA. MARY *moves slowly to the door* L.)

GRISELDA. I know, darling, all meat is nowadays, but try to eat it. I've such a lot to do this afternoon, and we're so late.

MARY. Well, what can you expect—having meals in all the wrong rooms ?

(*She exits* L. *None of the lunch party makes more than a half-hearted attempt to eat the unappetizing food.*)

GRISELDA. I suppose we should be eating a nice cool salad.

HAWES. Wi-with the st-state of the world as it is, Mrs Clement, we should be thankful for any food that is set before us.

GRISELDA. Ronny, you've been here six months now, you really can't go on calling me Mrs Clement. My name is Griselda. (*She smiles at the* VICAR.) Still, it's a pity I'm such a shocking housekeeper.

VICAR. Perhaps if you'd used a little more thought.

Griselda. I do sometimes. But I think things go worse when I'm trying.

Dennis. They certainly do.

Griselda. Now that's enough from you.

(**Mary** *enters* L. *She carries a dish of carrots, which she bangs down on to the table.*)

Mary. Carrots, but they ain't cooked.

Dennis. Oh, gosh !

(**Mary** *exits* L.)

Griselda. Raw carrots are good for the eyesight.

(*The telephone rings. The* Vicar *rises, moves to the telephone, and lifts the receiver.*)

TO PH

I'm sorry, but I'm just not a housekeeper by nature. It's much better when I leave things to Mary and just make up my mind to be uncomfortable and have awful things to eat.

Dennis. We always do have awful things to eat.

Vicar. Sh ! Sh ! I can't hear a word. (*Into the telephone.*) Hello . . . Oh, yes, Colonel—speaking . . . No, no. I won't forget them. I told you I'd have all the accounts ready . . . Yes . . . Good afternoon. (*He replaces the receiver.*)

BACK
TO TA

Griselda. The Big Bad Wolf, eh ?

Vicar (*moving to his chair* L. *of the table*). Yes, my esteemed and worthy Churchwarden, Colonel Protheroe. (*He sits.*)

Dennis. He's a pompous old fool.

Vicar. Dennis !

Griselda. Darling ! We know because the Colonel's wealthy he's the prop and stay of the parish. But he likes nobody and nobody likes him. And you don't, any more than we do. Whenever you see him, you get all ruffled and bothered.

SIT.

Vicar. I do not get ruffled and bothered.

Dennis } (*together*). { Oh. The things I've heard you say when he's gone.
Griselda } (*together*). { You do. What was he storming about in the village this morning ?

Vicar. Miss Hartnell's pound note.

Dennis. I thought you said she only put a ten-bob note in the plate ?

Vicar. She did, but she swears it was a pound.

Griselda. Well, of course, if you must always announce what the biggest note is.

Vicar. For some reason, the congregation likes to know.

Griselda. She's short-sighted, anyway.

Vicar. I know. I explained to her that none of us are as young as we were.

Griselda. I bet that put the lid on it.

VICAR. It did. She said the whole thing had a very bad look, and she was surprised that I didn't think so, too.

DENNIS. And off she trotted to the dear Colonel.

HAWES (*putting down his knife and fork*). Do you think the Colonel would bother about such—a trifling—er—amount ?

VICAR (*to* HAWES). Unfortunately yes, he just loves making a fuss about anything. He actually wants to check all the church accounts for deficiencies.

HAWES. What ?

GRISELDA. Oh, well, he must have some fun. Nobody flutters round calling him " dear Vicar," embroidering awful slippers for him.

DENNIS. And giving him bedsocks for Christmas.

HAWES (*rising*). Oh, dear !

GRISELDA. Oh, is it as bad as that, Ronny ?

HAWES. Oh no, I'm afraid I'm not very hungry. (*He moves to the french windows.*) It's not one of my good days. (*He turns.*) If you don't mind, I think I'll go into the ga-garden for a while. Excuse me.

(*He exits quickly through the french windows.*)

DENNIS. Phew !

GRISELDA (*really contrite*). I am sorry—he hardly eats a thing.

DENNIS. I don't wonder, Grisel. You were trained in the army to eat all this—we weren't.

GRISELDA. Len, as Ronny's so delicate, do you think we should insist that he finds lodgings—where they can cook ?

VICAR (*vaguely*). Maybe, but he seems happy enough here.

DENNIS. He won't leave—even if he starves. He's goofy about Grisel—the drip.

GRISELDA. Thanks.

VICAR (*putting down his knife and fork*). I wonder if Colonel Protheroe suspects *me* of embezzling the church funds ?

GRISELDA. Nobody would suspect you of anything, darling. You are so transparently honest. You really would make the most wonderful crook.

DENNIS. What ! Uncle Len a crook ?

GRISELDA (*to the* VICAR). When's the Colonel coming to put you on the spot ?

VICAR. Tomorrow evening at six-fifteen. I am not looking forward to it.

GRISELDA. Never mind. (*With a grand gesture.*) As a special treat, I'll get you some fish cakes.

VICAR. He'll just shout and bluster, and we'll be no further ahead.

GRISELDA. Why does he have to be so unpleasant ?—someone'll bump him off one of these days.

(MARY *enters* L. *and stands down* L. *of the* VICAR.)

VICAR. I hate to say it, but they'd be doing the world a service if they did.

DENNIS. Ah ! Listen to the Vicar. That will be remembered against you, Uncle Len.

MARY (*nudging the* VICAR). Go on. Get on with it.

(*The* VICAR *obediently tries to eat again, but gives it up.* MARY *exits* L.)

VICAR. What are you doing this afternoon, Griselda ?

GRISELDA (*firmly*). My duty.

VICAR (*surprised*). Oh ?

GRISELDA. We are pricing the articles for the fête. With suitable scandal thrown in.

VICAR. Who's coming ?

GRISELDA. Just the committee. Anne Protheroe, Mrs Price Ridley, and that terrible Miss Marple.

VICAR. I'd never describe Miss Marple as terrible.

GRISELDA. Oh—well, underneath that angelic exterior you know perfectly well she's the worst cat in the village.

DENNIS (*putting down his knife and fork*). Oh, no. Mem-Sahib Price Ridley is a far worse cat than Marple. Some day I'll pay her back for the things she's been saying about Lettice.

GRISELDA. What's she been saying ?

DENNIS. Plenty.

(*The noise of the clanging of tins, etc., is heard off through the french windows to* L.)

GRISELDA. Well, I wish she'd stop that awful racket in her garden.

(MARY *enters* L.)

VICAR. Yes, so do I.

GRISELDA. I should have thought paying those kids threepence an hour was an expensive way of scaring the birds off her fruit. Mary, we're not ready yet.

MARY. Okay, but it's Sandy Macpherson at two-fifteen.

(*She exits* L.)

GRISELDA. Dennis, would you bring a marrow back from the farm this afternoon ?

DENNIS. Sorry, I shall not be going. I'm playing golf.

GRISELDA. With Lettice ?

DENNIS. Yes, as a matter of fact.

GRISELDA. I wondered why you were looking so clean.

DENNIS (*looking at his watch*). Gosh ! I say, I'm a bit late. Would you mind if I went now ?

VICAR. No, go on.

GRISELDA. Don't you want any pudding ?

DENNIS (*rising*). No thanks, Grisel. (*He moves to the french windows.*) The dumplings were enough.

Griselda. Grisel indeed—no respect for his aunt.

(**Dennis** *exits to* L. *through the french windows.* **Griselda** *absent-mindedly picks up the note from beside* **Dennis**'s *plate.*)

ise

Vicar (*rising*). After all, you are only his aunt because you married me. (*He takes his pipe and tobacco pouch from his pocket.*) He means no harm.

fireplace

Griselda (*laughing*). Of course not. He's a darling.

Vicar (*crossing to the fireplace*). I'm glad you two get on. (*He stands with his back to the fireplace and starts to fill his pipe.*) Boys can be so difficult.

Griselda. Dennis is not far off being a man. Oh well, I suppose I shall have to get the marrow myself. (*She reads the message in the note.*)

(*The noise of the clanging of tins is heard off.*)

It seems our Miss Lettice also thinks Dennis is growing up.

Vicar. What have you got there ?

Griselda (*crumpling the note*). It's a—note to Dennis . . . He must have dropped it. You know, I think our Lettice is developing into a bit of a man-eater.

Vicar. Why, my dear, Lettice Protheroe is only a child.

Griselda. Is she—I wonder ? (*She rises.*) I think there's something queer about the whole Protheroe household.

Vicar. My dear, we have to try to be understanding about people. We all have to work out our own lives. Sorry, darling, am I being pompous ?

Griselda (*moving to the* **Vicar**). No, you are very sweet. But when you think of the men I could have married. Didn't it astonish you that I chose you ?

Vicar. Yes ; it did a bit.

Griselda. It gave me such a sense of power. I'm everything you most disapprove of, and yet—you couldn't resist me.

Gris

Vicar. I don't—disapprove, Griselda.

Griselda. Oh yes, you do. I make you uncomfortable and stir you up the wrong way, all the time ; and yet you adore me.

Vicar. Yes, I adore you. And what about you ? Do you ever regret marrying an old gentleman ?

Kiss

Griselda. Old gentleman—what do you think ? (*She kisses him.*) But you really don't deserve me.

(*The* **Vicar** *moves above the table and resumes filling his pipe.*)

If I had any sense, I'd make you jealous.

(**Mary** *enters* L.)

I know ! Lawrence Redding, of course. I think I shall have an affair with him.

below
Table
sit

Vicar. Just you try. (*He puts his pouch and pipe in his pocket, moves to his chair* L. *of the table, and sits.*)

(GRISELDA *tears up the note and throws it into the fireplace.*)

MARY (*moving above the table*). Ready *now ?*

GRISELDA. Oh yes, Mary, thank you. (*She perches herself on the* R. *arm of the sofa.*)

MARY (*moving to the table and stacking the dirty plates*). There's enough trouble down at Mr Redding's place.

GRISELDA. Oh ? What ?

MARY. Yes. Women.

GRISELDA. What ?

MARY (*darkly*). Women—I said. My Mr Archer's mum does for him. She says they are in and out of his cottage all the time. In and out.

VICAR. Oh, come, come, Mary. Mr Redding's an artist. He paints and—things.

(MARY, *laden with plates, moves to the door* L.)

MARY. Things—is right.

(*She exits* L.)

VICAR. Can't you do something with Mary ? Can't you train her ?

GRISELDA. Darling, don't be silly, if I train her she'll leave us. Nobody could possibly want her as she is.

(LETTICE PROTHEROE *enters through the french windows from* L. *She is aged seventeen, and slight. She likes to think herself ethereally vague. She wears a summer frock and a yellow beret. She wanders wispily into the room and looks around before seeing* GRISELDA *and the* VICAR.)

LETTICE (*at length*). Oh, it's you.

GRISELDA (*rising*). Yes, we live here.

LETTICE. Where's Dennis ?

GRISELDA. Didn't you meet him ? He said he was going to play golf with you.

LETTICE. Golf—oh no ! I don't think he is.

GRISELDA. But, Lettice, he said you'd asked him.

LETTICE (*moving to* GRISELDA). But that was for Friday, and today's Monday.

GRISELDA. It's Tuesday.

LETTICE. Tuesday ! Oh dear, that means I've forgotten to go to lunch with some people for the third time.

GRISELDA. Goodness ! Would you like to telephone ?

LETTICE (*moving above the table to* L.C.). Oh no, it doesn't matter. Oh dear, nothing but trouble. If I can wear my swim suit on the beach, why can't I be painted in it ?

VICAR. What did you say ?

LETTICE (*leaning seductively over the* VICAR'S *right shoulder*). I really look rather fetching in it, Mr Clement. Then there had to go and be all this shemozzle about Lawrence. He's awfully attractive, isn't he ?

Griselda. Who ? Lawrence ? Yes, I suppose he is.

Lettice. Father's forbidden him to paint me in my swim suit. Maddening, isn't it ? But he only knows about it if Lawrence comes up to the Hall. So why shouldn't I sit for Lawrence in your studio ?

Vicar. Not if your father forbids it.

Lettice. No ?

Vicar. No.

Lettice (*moving up* c.). Oh dear, how tiresome everybody is. If only I had some money, I could go away.

Griselda. But you have got money.

Lettice. Not enough. I want to go and live in London. Father won't let me. You will tell Dennis, won't you ?

(*She exits through the french windows to* l.)

Vicar. Bless my soul ! What are we supposed to tell Dennis ?

Griselda. I haven't the slightest idea. (*She moves to the french windows.*) Well, she seems to be drifting towards the studio. I suppose she's looking for Lawrence. She's got men on the brain. (*She moves above the table.*)

Vicar. I'm beginning to wonder if we were wise to give Redding the loan of the studio.

Griselda. He has to paint somewhere, and the light in his cottage is awful.

(Mary *enters* l. *She carries a dish of rice pudding, which she places on the table.*)

Mary. The rice pudding—and Miss Marple.

RISE

(Griselda *picks up the meat dish from the table and hands it to* Mary. Miss Marple *enters* l. *She is neat, and of uncertain years. She is, in fact, to look at, a typical maiden lady living on reduced means in the country. She carries a round wicker basket laden with parcels for the fête. The* Vicar *rises.*)

Marple. My dear Vicar. I'm so sorry. I didn't realize you'd be having lunch at this hour. (*She places the basket of goods on the floor down* l.)

(Mary *exits* l.)

And in here, too.

Griselda. I am sorry, but the dining room is piled to the ceiling with our efforts for the fête.

Vicar (r. *of* Miss Marple). You seem to have brought a wonderful selection, Miss Marple.

Marple. Oh ! My real contribution will be the plants for my own stall. But naturally I have to leave them in the ground until the last moment.

Griselda. Naturally. Won't you sit down ?

Marple (*crossing to the sofa and taking a good look at the table on the way*). Thank you, dear Griselda. (*She sits.*)

Griselda. But I thought Mem-Sahib was coping with the garden stall this year. (*She moves to* L. *of the sofa.*)

Marple (*looking at* Griselda ; *sweetly*). We don't always take Mrs Price Ridley's—er—blustering seriously, do we dear ?

Griselda. But I thought—as she has a gardener—and such a large garden—with all that fruit.

Marple. Tch ! I'm interrupting your meal.

(Mary *enters* L. *She carries a cream-jug.*)

Griselda. Oh, no. This rice pudding has no intention of being eaten.

Marple. Poor dear Vicar. I had one of Nellie's lightest soufflés. You remember, Vicar, she used to make you one occasionally—in the good old days.

Put pa
clan
sir cl
D. L

(Mary *guffaws and exits* L. Griselda *wheels the trolley to the table, and during the following lines, piles crockery on to it.*)

Though that terrible noise at Mrs Price Ridley's quite took away my appetite. I've been wondering if I could spare some wallflower seedlings for my stall. Yes, I think I could. Such a pity it's too early for most cuttings. I wonder if we can hope to take fifty pounds this year.

Griselda. Surely we can set the target higher than that.

Marple. The most we've ever taken was eighty-two pounds, and that was in nineteen forty-four. We had American flyers stationed here then. Such dear boys. They taught me one or two things about human nature that even I didn't know.

(Griselda's *face is a study.*)

I'd never met such instinctive, uninhibited people before. At the fête—they bought up every single one of my little pen-wipers to send back home as souvenirs. But, of course, you weren't here then.

Griselda (*collecting the knives and forks ; swallowing her laughter*). No. I was sitting on a gun-site in nineteen forty-four, not dreaming that fêtes or parsons existed. (*She grins affectionately at the* Vicar.)

Marple. And the dear Vicar was a bachelor, with us all trying to make things comfortable for him. Oh, dear ! The war brought many changes.

(Mrs Price Ridley *enters* L. *She is a lady who still wears the tussore suits left over from her days in India. She carries a basket of parcels for the fête.* Griselda *drops some cutlery with a clatter on to the trolley.*)

Mrs Price Ridley. Salaam ! (*She puts the basket on the bureau.*)

ake
parcel
put it
down

VICAR. Ah. Mrs Price Ridley.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Some fuss up at the Hall, I hear.

GRISELDA. Really !

MARPLE (*softly*). Colonel Protheroe has turned Mr Redding out of the house. He was painting Lettice in her bathing dress.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY (*crossing to the chair down* R.). I always thought there was something between those two. That fellow's always mooching about at the Hall. (*She sits.*) Pity the girl hasn't got a mother. Stepmother not the same thing. Not the same thing at all.

GRISELDA (*folding the tablecloth*). I'm sure Anne Protheroe does her best. (*She puts the cloth on the trolley.*)

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Young girls are more trouble than they're worth—two a penny in India. Damn glad I only had boys myself. Even though they do cost more.

VICAR (*sitting in the chair* L. *of the table*). Perhaps we have a romance in our midst. Lettice is very pretty and Redding quite a good-looking fellow.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. But an artist ! Loose ! Bound to be. Paris ! Models ! Nudes !

SIT

(GRISELDA *wheels the trolley up* C.)

GRISELDA. He's painting me, too.

MARPLE. But not in your bathing dress.

GRISELDA (*moving to* L. *of the sofa*). It might be worse.

(MRS PRICE RIDLEY *and* MISS MARPLE *exchange glances.*)

MARPLE. Dear Griselda.

GRISELDA. Well, I should be very glad if Lawrence and Lettice got together.

MARPLE. That particular couple won't, I'm sure. Oh no. Quite another person *I'd* think. Lettice didn't say anything when she was in here just now ?

GRISELDA. You saw her come in here, then ?

MARPLE. Well, I happened to be snipping off some dead roses when I saw her cross the garden and come towards the french windows.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY (*laughing loudly*). Wish I overlooked your garden instead of your front door. Miss Marple sees everything that's worth seeing.

MARPLE. And hears everything. (*To* MRS PRICE RIDLEY. *Acidly.*) All that shouting and banging of tins in your garden, for instance.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Got to save my fruit somehow.

MARPLE. I had a look at your currants and raspberries yesterday. Full of maggots. Not worth the picking.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Nonsense !

Marple. Why not let the little birds enjoy them, dear Mrs Price Ridley ?

(**Griselda** *crosses swiftly to the fireplace, takes the cigarette box from the mantelpiece and offers it hurriedly to* **Mrs Price Ridley.**)

Mrs Price Ridley (*angrily*). They're a very fine crop, and the birds are not going to enjoy 'em.

Griselda. Cigarette, Mrs Price Ridley ?

(**Mrs Price Ridley** *takes a cigarette.*)

Griselda. Miss Marple ?

Marple. Indeed, no. I never smoke.

(**Griselda** *replaces the box on the mantelpiece, picks up the matches, and lights* **Mrs Price Ridley's** *cigarette.*)

Vicar (*trying to pour oil*). Why don't you try that new device they use at Cromwell farm ?

Marple. Yes, why don't you, Mrs Price Ridley ?

(**Griselda** *perches herself on the* R. *arm of the settee.*)

Vicar. It's some kind of fuse rope with blank charges that go off at intervals. Cheaper, too, I should think.

Mrs Price Ridley. Can't be cheaper than threepence an hour.

Marple. But what about our poor nerves ?

Mrs Price Ridley. Oh, my God !

Marple. Dear, dear, dear !

Mrs Price Ridley. What a fuss over a bit of noise. You should have lived in Karachi. Any case, I'm picking this evening.

(**Hawes** *enters* L. *He stops dead on seeing the group. He carries a bundle of magazines.*)

Hawes. De-de-dear, dear. I'm sorry. So sorry. I didn't know anybody was . . .

RISE
X Left

Vicar. That's all right, Hawes. Were you wanting me ?

Hawes. No, Mr Clement—that is—I just wanted to know when Colonel Pro-Protheroe was coming to see you.

Vicar. Tomorrow evening at a quarter past six. Why ? Did you want . . .

Hawes. No. Nothing, thank you. I'm just on my way to take these magazines to the Smithson child. It was nothing at all.

Retu
LSC

(*He turns and exits* L.)

Marple. Colonel Protheroe is a hard, unfeeling man.

Griselda. What's the Colonel been up to now ?

Marple. He is threatening to sell all his property in the village.

Griselda. Oh, that.

Vicar. You really mustn't upset yourself, Miss Marple, it's only a rumour. I've heard it over and over again.

Marple. This time it isn't, dear Vicar. The Colonel told me as much. Only this morning. He laughed in my face and said I'd better make the best of my garden whilst I had it.

Vicar. But nobody has the right to turn you out these days.

Marple. They can if they find me other accommodation.

Mrs Price Ridley (*laughing*). Probably offer you a prefab.

Marple. You can laugh. You own your house. I'm only a tenant. I've planted every tree and shrub in my garden. I built the rockery. I've come to look upon it as my very own. No-one has the right to take it away.

Vicar. And they won't, Miss Marple.

Griselda (*rising*). I don't think it's any use waiting for Anne Protheroe. Shall we go into the dining-room and get on with the price tickets ?

(Miss Marple *and* Mrs Price Ridley *rise.* Mary *enters* L. *and moves up* C. *The* Vicar *rises, moves to the door* L., *and holds it open.*)

Mrs Price Ridley (*crossing to the bureau*). I'm getting Jones to make up a dozen boxes of dahlias and a dozen boxes of wallflower plants. (*She picks up her basket.*)

Marple (*crossing to* L.). Mr Jones is a great one for forcing frames, like all *paid* gardeners. (*She picks up her basket.*) Your wallflowers are too lank and weakly ever to transplant.

Mrs Price Ridley. Rubbish ! My wallflowers are not lank and . . .

(*Her voice dies away as she exits* L., *followed by* Miss Marple. Griselda *crosses to the door* L.)

Griselda (*grinning at the* Vicar). Keep your fingers crossed for me. Mem-Sahib is determined to get that garden stall.

(*She exits* L. *The* Vicar *moves to his desk up* L. *and sits at it.*)

Mary. Them staying for tea ? (*She drops the right leaf of the table.*)

Vicar. I expect so, Mary.

Mary. Not enough cakes if Mrs Price Ridley stays. (*She drops the left leaf of the table.*) Sir, you know my Mr Archer ? (*She moves the chair from above the* L. *end of the table and puts it against the wall,* L. *of the french windows.*)

Vicar. Yes.

Mary. D'ye think you could put in a good word for him with that Colonel ?

Vicar. What's Dick been up to this time ?

Mary. Nothing. It's just the Colonel's got his knife into him. Says he'll have him in prison in no time. Says he poaches. What a name for earning your living honest the way my Mr Archer does.

Vicar. Well, I'll do what I can, but if Dick does . . .

MARY. He don't no more than's usual. But thanks. (*She moves to the bureau, picks up the bowl of flowers and transfers it to the table* C. *Confidentially.*) It's worth your while. (*She moves the chair from above the* R. *end of the table and puts it against the wall above the fireplace.*) You didn't half enjoy that wild duck last week, didn't you now? (*She looks off to* L. *out of the french windows.*) Blimey, look who's coming. Mrs Protheroe herself. Blimey, talk about gla-moor. (*She moves to the trolley and wheels it to the door* L.) If I could wear clothes like that I'd be out of here before Big Ben struck two.

(*She exits* L. *with the trolley.* ANNE PROTHEROE *enters through the french windows. She is an exceedingly attractive woman of about thirty-five, and beautifully dressed. The* VICAR *rises.*)

ANNE. Forgive me coming in this way, Mr Clement, but it's so much quicker than going round to the front door, and I knew I was late.

VICAR. That's quite all right. The ladies are busy pricing at the moment.

ANNE. That's not my department. I'm only eats and drinks.

VICAR. In that case, won't you sit down? (*He indicates the chair* L. *of the table.*)

ANNE (*sitting* L. *of the table*). I really said I'd come along because your wife wanted some support over allocating the stalls.

VICAR (*moving to the fireplace*). I imagine that part of the campaign will be fought out over tea. (*He picks up the cigarette box from the mantelpiece.*)

ANNE (*looking around*). I've never been in here before. What a very nice room.

VICAR. Is it? Yes, I suppose it is. (*He moves above the table.*) Cigarette?

ANNE. No, thank you. You haven't seen my stepdaughter, have you?

(*The* VICAR *replaces the cigarette box on the mantelpiece.*)

VICAR. Lettice! Oh, she was here about a quarter of an hour ago. (*He stands with his back to the fireplace.*)

ANNE. She really is the most absent-minded child. She invites five completely strange young men for the afternoon, and then disappears.

VICAR. How is the Colonel?

ANNE (*smiling*). Still fiendishly bad-tempered with his sciatica.

VICAR. I'm afraid sciatica would make a saint bad-tempered.

ANNE (*sighing*). Underneath it all, my husband's such a nice person.

VICAR. I'm sure he is.

(LAWRENCE REDDING *enters through the french windows. He is a* *young man around thirty with great charm, though a hint of ruthlessness lies behind the charm.*)

Lawrence. May I come in ? Oh, there . . . Oh, Mrs Protheroe. Good afternoon. I'm—well, I wanted to get hold of Mrs Clement. She's sitting for me, you know, sir.

Vicar. Come in, Redding. My wife's busy with preparations for the fête.

Lawrence (*moving above the table*). I don't seem very lucky with my models at the moment, they keep disappearing.

Anne (*laughing*). I'm sorry about the commotion over Lettice. You must blame the sciatica.

Lawrence (*to the* Vicar ; *charmingly*). About the famous fête : I had thought, perhaps, I could do lightning portrait sketches for you.

(*Voices are heard off* L.)

Vicar (*enthusiastically*). Would you, my boy ? That would be grand, quite an innovation.

Anne. Oh, Lawrence, how kind of you ! We'll have every spinster in the parish sitting for you.

Lawrence. At two bob a time.

Anne. At two bob a time. Good heavens—listen, Vicar.

Vicar. It sounds to me— (*he listens*) as though the committee's already switched from the price tickets to the stalls.

Anne (*rising*). Then I must go to your wife's assistance as I promised.

(Lawrence *moves to the door* L. *and opens it.* Anne *exits* L. Lawrence *closes the door.*)

Lawrence. Darn glad *I* haven't got to face that committee.

(Dr Haydock *enters through the french windows from* R. *He is an elderly man, dressed in tweed jacket and flannels. He carries several parcels.*)

Haydock. Hello, Padre. My sister asked me to bring all this stuff up and make her excuses. She's bottling black currants and some kind of crisis has developed. (*He drops two or three parcels.*) Oh dear, I seem to be dropping everything.

(Lawrence *goes to the rescue.*)

Lawrence. Let the whole lot go, Doctor.

(Lawrence *picks up the parcels and puts them on the drinks cabinet and chair up* R.)

Haydock. Thanks. Everyone turns into a beast of burden on these occasions. (*He turns to go.*) Oh, I almost forgot. Is young Hawes about ?

Vicar. He's gone to visit the Smithson child.

Haydock (*taking a small box out of his pocket*). I've got some new tablets for his headaches. (*He moves to the* Vicar *and hands him the box.*)

Vicar. I'll give them to him. (*He puts the box on the mantelpiece.*)

Haydock. He'll have to go slow on them—they're pretty strong.

Vicar. Hawes's not really ill, is he ?

Haydock. There's nothing radically wrong with him. (*He sits* R. *of the table.*) But he's had *Encephalitis Lethargica*—that's sleepy sickness to you—pretty badly before he came here.

Vicar. Yes, he told me. But hasn't he completely recovered ?

(Lawrence *takes a sketching pad and pencil from his pocket, moves to the armchair down* L., *sits, and starts to sketch* Haydock.)

Haydock. Oh, yes. Supposed to have a clean bill now, and so long as he has no emotional upsets he ought to be all right.

Lawrence. Isn't sleepy sickness the disease that can entirely change a person's character—for good or for bad ?

Haydock. That does happen occasionally.

Vicar. Well, there's nothing wrong with Hawes' character.

Lawrence. I'm sure there isn't. Just left him strung up and nervy.

Haydock. Disease and glands can play some nasty tricks. You know, I'd rather have my job than the Padre's here.

Vicar. Why do you say that ?

Haydock. Because you, Len, deal with right and wrong, and I—I wonder if there's any such thing.

Lawrence. Good heavens ! What a thing to say to a parson.

Vicar. If there isn't, then upon what can we base any creed—any society ?

Haydock. What if what you call right and wrong is just a matter of glandular secretion—too much of one, too little of another ; so that you get your murderer, your thief, your habitual criminal ?

Vicar. By that theory we'd be punishing men for glands, for a disease they can't help.

Haydock. Exactly. And you don't hang a man for having tuberculosis.

Lawrence. Or for passing on flu germs.

Vicar. But just a minute, a sick man isn't a danger to the community.

Haydock. In a sense he is ; he infects people.

Vicar (*quietly*). I've never heard you speak like this before, John.

Haydock (*relaxing*). I don't usually air my theories. What started me off, I suppose, was seeing this disease of Hawes' at such close quarters. How it could—I don't say it has—change his character.

(*Voices are heard off* L.)

Think what an innocent victim he would be.

Vicar (*smiling*). Well, nothing like that's happened—fortunately.

(*The voices now swell to a great volume.* Griselda *enters* L., *stands at the door, and beckons desperately to the* Vicar.)

Vicar (*crossing to* L.). I—I really think I'd better go and see if I can restore the peace. Shan't be a moment, Redding.

Haydock (*rising*). Well, I must be on my way.

Vicar (*at the door* L.). Aren't you going to help me, John ?

Haydock. Not on your life. I'm off home at the double.

xIT

(*The* Vicar *exits* L. Haydock *moves to the french windows and exits through them to* R. Lawrence *rises, puts his pad and the pencil in his pocket, wanders to the fireplace and helps himself to a cigarette from the box on the mantelpiece. As he lights it* Lettice *enters through the french windows, from* L.)

Lettice. Oh, there you are, Lawrence.

Lawrence. Hello, Lettice.

Lettice. I've been looking for you.

Lawrence. Oh. Why ?

Lettice (*moving down* C.). I was thinking of going to the pictures in Yenminster this evening. Like to come ?

Lawrence. Er—no thank you, Lettice. I'm afraid I'm busy. (*He sits on the sofa, picks up the magazine, and opens it.*)

Lettice. It's a good film. Lots of men would like to take me.

Lawrence. Then I suggest you run along and ask one of them.

Lettice (*perching herself on the* L. *arm of the sofa ; with a great sigh*). Oh dear, it's an awful pity, really.

Lawrence. What is ?

Lettice. About us.

Lawrence. What about—*us* ?

Lettice. We ought to get together. We've a lot in common, you and I. Both knowing what we want out of life and both ready to go after it.

Lawrence (*bored*). Maybe, my child, but I'm not after you.

Lettice (*rising*). Well, then, all I can say is, you've been spending a hell of a lot of time up at the Hall. And—if it's Anne you're after, you're wasting your time.

(Lawrence *rises and tries to speak.*)

That's all right. A lot of other men have tried, too. But you don't know my precious stepmother as I do. She's no use for anyone but my father, and that's only because of his money.

Lawrence. You little . . .

Lettice. She's cold—in every way. Why, even *I* can't make her lose her temper.

Lawrence. What a vicious child you are. How does she put up with you ? (*He drops the magazine on to the sofa.*)

LETTICE. Some women will put up with anything for money.

LAWRENCE. If you're not out of here in one second, I'll put you across my knee and spank you.

LETTICE (*moving to him*). You know, I think I'd rather like that.

LAWRENCE. Outside ! (*He turns to the fireplace. After a pause.*) Outside.

LETTICE. All right. (*She moves up* C.) But remember—" Hell hath no fury like a—woman scorned."

(*She exits through the french windows, to* L. *Voices are heard off* L. LAWRENCE *moves to* L. *of the french windows and stands with his back to the audience looking down at the plant.* MRS PRICE RIDLEY *and* MISS MARPLE *enter down* L. LAWRENCE *swings round almost too quickly.*)

MRS PRICE RIDLEY (*crossing to the french windows ; to* LAWRENCE). Trying old woman ! Knows everybody's business in the village. Doesn't drink, doesn't smoke, doesn't swear—she's a damned nuisance.

LAWRENCE. What on earth's the matter ?

MARPLE (*smiling sweetly*). Dear Mrs Price Ridley. She's just agreed—in fact, insisted—that I run the garden stall as usual. Now isn't that nice ?

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Nice ! All spinsters should be put away at fifty.

CURTAIN.

SCENE 2

SCENE.—*The same. The following day.* 6-45 *p.m.*

The gate-legged table has been removed. The tub armchair is now C *and the elbow chair stands down* L. *The small chairs from up* R. *and* R. *of the gate-legged table have also been removed.*

When the CURTAIN *rises, it is a dull evening, with rain pending. The french windows are open. Without the bright sunshine of the previous day, the recess is dark and gloomy save for the light of the desk-lamp which is switched on. But it is possible to see the body of an elderly man sprawled across the desk.*

VICAR (*off* L. ; *calling*). Mary, is Colonel Protheroe still here ?

MARY (*off* L. ; *in the distance ; calling*). Yes, he's in the study. ENTE

(*The* VICAR *enters* L.)

VICAR (*as he enters*). I'm so sorry to keep you waiting, Colonel ; but I was called away suddenly . . . (*His voice trails off as he sees the body lying across the desk. He moves to* L. *of it.*) Protheroe ! Protheroe ! (*He puts his hand on the body's shoulder.*)

(*The body, disturbed, slumps suddenly, practically sliding off the desk.*)

(*He moves quickly to the door* L. *and calls off.*) Mary ! Mary !

Mary (*off ; calling*). All right. I'm coming.

Vicar (*looking back at the body ; urgently*). Here—quickly !

(Dennis *enters* L. *He wears bicycle clips on his trousers. The* Vicar *blocks his sight of the body.*)

Dennis. Is anything up, Uncle Len ? You sounded . . .

Vicar. Dennis ! There's been an accident. Get Dr Haydock.

Dennis (*thrilled*). An accident !

Vicar (*sharply*). Do as I say. Quickly !

Dennis (*crossing to the french windows*). Gosh !

(*He exits through the french windows, to* R. *The* Vicar *moves to the french windows and looks out.* Mary *enters* L. *She gives a good impression of bustling.*)

Vicar (*turning*). What do you want, Mary ?

Mary. Cor blimey ! You jus' called me. I were listening to . . . (*She sees the body.*) Ooooh !

Vicar (*moving* C. ; *kindly*). There's been an accident.

Mary (*not taking her eyes off the body*). The Colonel—is he—dead ?

Vicar. I—I don't know.

Mary (*slowly getting her tongue*). I never heard a thing. Right as rain he were when I let him in. Bad-tempered as usual, of course, but . . . Tch !

Vicar. I suppose he was annoyed I was out ?

Mary. Yes. Said he didn't mind waiting though.

Vicar (*moving down* C.). All right, Mary. Now run along, the doctor will be here in a minute. (*He moves to the fireplace.*)

Mary (*pointing at the body*). And *you* saying only yesterday he oughter be dead.

(*She exits* L. Haydock *enters hurriedly through the french windows from* R. *He carries his bag, but is without his hat.*)

Haydock (*breathlessly*). What's the matter, Len ? Dennis caught me in the lane. He tells me there's—been an accident.

Vicar. The Colonel. I think he's dead. (*He points to the body.*)

(Haydock *moves swiftly to* L. *of the desk, puts his bag on it, and examines the body rapidly.*)

Well ? (*He moves to* R. *of the desk.*)

Haydock. He's dead all right.

Vicar. Good heavens !

Haydock. Been dead about twenty-five minutes to half an hour I should say, the blood is beginning to congeal.

Vicar. Suicide ?

Haydock. Out of the question. Look, shot right through the back of the head.

Vicar. Yes. And of course, there's no gun.

Haydock. We'd better not touch anything. I'll phone Slack at home. He's generally there by now. (*He picks up the telephone receiver and dials.*) It'll save time not having to explain it all to the police at Yenminster.

Vicar (*crossing to the fireplace*). How the Inspector will hate having to come here—such an atheist.

Haydock (*into the telephone*). Inspector Slack ? . . . This is Haydock speaking. Can you come round to the Vicarage right away ? . . . Yes, it's very important . . . I think it's murder. (*He replaces the receiver and switches off the desk lamp.*)

Vicar. Murder !

Haydock. 'Fraid so.

Vicar. Yes, what else could it be ?

(Haydock *moves to the armchair and sits.*)

Haydock. Nasty business. Now who would . . . Of course, I know he wasn't popular.

Vicar. But people aren't often murdered for that reason.

Haydock. People are murdered for the oddest reasons. When did you find him ?

Vicar. I was late for my appointment with him. It was for six-fifteen, and I didn't get home until about half an hour later. When I came in I met—I mean—here he was. There's one rather curious thing, though.

Haydock. Yes ?

Vicar. I'd been telephoned for suddenly to go and see old Abbott, of Lower Farm. When I got there everyone was very surprised to see me. Abbott was much better and his wife flatly denied telephoning at all.

Haydock. You mean you were being got out of the way ?

Vicar. Looks like it.

Haydock. And your wife ?

Vicar. Griselda went up to London for the day. She often does on Wednesdays.

Haydock. And Mary would be in the kitchen the other side of the house ?

Vicar. Yes. Doubtless, with the radio on. (*He turns away to the fireplace.*)

Haydock (*after slight pause*). And—Hawes ?

Vicar (*turning to him*). It's his time for meditation in church. But I don't really know.

Haydock. What about Dennis ?

Vicar. Up at the farm. He's just got back.

Haydock. Oh yes, he told me. Who knew Protheroe was coming here ?

Vicar. A great many people. The appointment was made in the village street yesterday morning. And you know how the

Colonel always shouts—shouted at the top of his voice. He always imagined everyone was as deaf as he was.

Haydock (*rising*). The whole village knew, eh ? They always do in any case. (*He moves to* L. *of the desk.*) Protheroe, eh ? I suppose it was a personal thing—not just some thief after money.

Vicar. I don't think he ever carried much money on him, and there certainly wouldn't be much here.

(Hawes *enters through the french windows, from* R.)

Hawes (*not seeing the body*). Mr Cle-Clement, could I borrow your notes on the fifth chapter of Revelations ?

Haydock (*moving to* L. *of* Hawes). Oh, Hawes. Where have you been—the last half hour ?

Hawes (*surprised*). Why, in the ch-church.

Haydock. Was there anyone there ? Anyone else ?

Hawes (*looking at the* Vicar ; *nervously*). The Verger, Mr Marshall was there. (*He suddenly sees the body and stares at it in horror.*) Oh ! Blood ! Blood ! Look at the blood ! What's happened ? Well, why doesn't somebody do something ? (*He moves to* L. *of the desk.*) Is he dead ?

Vicar. I'm afraid so.

(Dennis *enters through the french windows and stands just inside the room.*)

Hawes. So there is righteousness in the world after all. And justice shall be done. Oh, God ! The Colonel !

Haydock (*moving to* Hawes). Control yourself, my boy. You know it is bad for you to get excited.

Hawes. " Ye shall reap where ye have sown," saith the Lord. Ha, ha, ha.

Haydock. Come and lie down.

(*He leads* Hawes *to the door* L., *and they exit.*)

Dennis. Uncle Len !

Vicar (*moving to him*). Dennis ! What are you doing here ?

Dennis. Could I come inside ; just for a minute ?

Vicar. You could not. Stay outside and don't let anybody in.

Dennis. Okay, Uncle. Hawes's got a screw loose, hasn't he ?

Vicar. Go on. Go on.

(Dennis *exits through the french windows to* L. *The* Vicar *eases below the sofa.* Haydock *enters* L.)

Haydock (*moving* C.). I sent Hawes up to his room. Bad thing his coming in like that.

Vicar. Naturally, a bit of a shock.

(Mary *enters* L.)

Mary (*announcing*). Detective Inspector Slack.

(INSPECTOR SLACK *enters* L. *He is an energetic, small man with a tooth-brush moustache and eyes that snap ceaselessly. He wears plain clothes.* MARY *exits* L.)

HAYDOCK. Oh, hello, Inspector.

INSPECTOR (*accusingly*). Murder at the Vicarage, eh ! (*He glares at the* VICAR *as though he is the culprit.*) Lucky you caught me. Only just got home. Been in court all day. (*He moves to* L. *of the desk and looks at the body.*) The Colonel. Well, I'm damned !

HAYDOCK (*moving to* R. *of the desk*). Yes.

INSPECTOR (*to the* VICAR ; *ferociously*). What was he doing here ?

VICAR (*moving up* C.). Waiting for me. I'd been out and was late for our appointment.

INSPECTOR. What were you seeing him about ?

VICAR. Certain parochial matters.

INSPECTOR. Everything been messed up and pulled about, I suppose.

HAYDOCK. I've touched nothing.

VICAR. Neither have I.

INSPECTOR. Any sign of the weapon ?

HAYDOCK. No. Seems as though it might have been a premeditated crime.

INSPECTOR. What makes you say that ?

HAYDOCK. The Vicar had a bogus telephone call to get him out of the way.

(*The* INSPECTOR *looks at the* VICAR.)

VICAR. Yes, it was about half-past five. I was asked to go at once to Mr Abbott, of Lower Farm. When I got there he denied phoning for me at all.

INSPECTOR. Was it a man's voice or a woman's on the telephone ?

VICAR. I thought it was a woman's, Mrs Abbott's. But it could easily have been a high-pitched man's voice, I suppose.

INSPECTOR. H'm ! (*To* HAYDOCK.) Any idea of the type of gun ?

HAYDOCK. Can't say for certain until we extract the bullet. But I should say it was fired from a revolver, probably of small calibre, say a Mauser.

INSPECTOR (*to* HAYDOCK). How long had he been dead when you examined him ?

HAYDOCK (*hesitatingly*). I put it at just over half an hour.

INSPECTOR. Now, let me see. What would he be sitting here for ? (*He glances over the desk.*) Maybe he wanted to . . . Hallo—what's this ? (*He picks up a piece of paper from the desk and reads it.*) " Dear Clement, I really cannot wait any longer . . . " And then it stops. (*He looks up.*) It's headed six twenty. How long had he been dead, did you say, Doctor ?

HAYDOCK. I said about half an hour, but . . .

INSPECTOR (*looking at his watch*). It's just after seven now. You phoned me about five or six minutes ago. Say five to seven. Discovery of the body about quarter to seven. I imagine you were fetched immediately ?

HAYDOCK. Yes.

(*The* VICAR *nods.*)

INSPECTOR. Say you examined the body at ten to—why, that brings it almost to the identical second. It's plain as a pikestaff. He sits down here to write this. The murderer comes softly in and shoots him as he writes.

(*As he speaks,* MISS MARPLE *enters quietly through the french windows from* L. *The others do not see her. She carries a basket.*)

MARPLE (*moving to* L. *of the sofa*). May I come in, gentlemen ?

VICAR (*turning ; shocked*). Miss Marple.

INSPECTOR. And what, may I ask, Madam, are you doing here ?

MARPLE (*holding up the basket*). I brought the dear Vicar a raspberry flan. It's still hot. (*She puts the basket on the table, above the settee.*) I only picked the raspberries this morning.

INSPECTOR. I must ask you . . .

MARPLE (*pointing to the body*). Poor Colonel Protheroe ! How very sad. Not at all a pleasant gentleman and not well liked, but to meet a violent death. And to be actually shot here in the Vicarage. Oh, you poor dear Vicar.

INSPECTOR (*pouncing*). How do you know he was shot ?

MARPLE. Not so loud, Inspector, please. I happened to overhear you as I came in. (*She waves towards the french windows.*)

INSPECTOR. This is disgraceful. I shall have the room sealed off at once. Where have you been this last hour ?

MARPLE. Why, watering my lawn, of course. You can ask my Nellie. (*She smiles smugly at knowing the correct procedure.*) We've had so little rain of late, haven't we, Doctor ?

(HAYDOCK *picks up his bag and moves to the door* L.)

HAYDOCK. I haven't noticed, Miss Marple. I'm afraid I'm no gardener. Well, death may be important, but birth is more important. Mrs Goodwin's twins—any moment now. Give me a ring if I can help you.

(*He exits* L. *The* INSPECTOR *lifts the telephone receiver and dials.*)

INSPECTOR (*into the telephone*). Hello, Yenminster ! . . . Give me the Station Sergeant . . . Thompson ? . . . Slack here . . . Send me a photographer and a couple of men over to St Mary Mead Vicarage as soon as you can. (*He replaces the receiver.*)

(*While the* INSPECTOR *speaks,* MISS MARPLE *looks eagerly around the room.*)

INSPECTOR (*to* MISS MARPLE). Whilst watering your lawn, did you see anyone enter or leave this study about six-twenty ?

X C

VICAR. Inspector, do you think it's right to question Miss Marple in the circumstances ? 2 Sre

MARPLE (*to the* VICAR). Oh, that's quite all right, Vicar. (*To the* INSPECTOR.) I always find that it is the weaker sex who stand up better in this kind of situation, although we're quite likely to faint when it's all over. Pray proceed, Inspector. (*She moves to* R. *of the desk.*)

(MARY *enters* L., *and hovers at the door.*)

INSPECTOR. Thank you. If you don't mind, Miss Marple . . .

MARPLE. Now, that note, Inspector, I happened to overhear you say . . .

MARY (*to the* VICAR). Phist ! Phist !

INSPECTOR (*to* MARY). What do you think you are doing ?

MARY. I thought I'd better tell the Vicar the Sunday School Teachers are hanging about in the hall.

VICAR. Oh yes, I'd forgotten. (*He eases to* L. *of the sofa.*) Tell them I'm very sorry, but I can't see them tonight. X

MARPLE. Inspector—there are . . .

INSPECTOR (*moving to* R. *of* MARY ; *ignoring* MARPLE). Your name's Mary Jenkins, isn't it ? SIT

MARY. Blimey, you ought to know me by now. Of course.

INSPECTOR. You showed the Colonel in here ?

MARY. Yus.

INSPECTOR. Well, after you got back to the kitchen, did you hear anything ?

MARY. 'Eard nothing. What's more, I didn't want to hear nothing. I were expecting Geraldo at a quarter-past.

INSPECTOR. And yet there was a shot fired that killed the Colonel.

MARY (*doggedly*). Didn't hear no shot. If there'd been a shot I've have heard it.

INSPECTOR. But . . .

MARY. I know. I know. There must have been one as the old . . . as the Colonel's been found shot—but there it is. *I* didn't hear one.

INSPECTOR. What time did the Colonel arrive ?

MARY. Six o'clock.

INSPECTOR. How do you know ? Did you look at the clock ?

MARY. No. I heard the church clock chime as I opened the door to him. And what's more, 'e said he was early for his date with the reverend, but 'e'd wait.

INSPECTOR. And you heard nothing ?

MARY. Do you have to go on asking the same questions ? I heard nothing.

(*She exits* L. GRISELDA *enters through the french windows. She wears a summer hat and coat. She carries several parcels.*)

GRISELDA (*moving below the sofa*). Hello, darling ; goodness, what a day. (*She puts the parcels on the sofa.*) I've bought everything in sight . . . (*She breaks off and looks towards the* INSPECTOR.) Hello, what's the matter ?

(*The* VICAR *takes* GRISELDA *firmly by the arm, prevents her looking at the desk, and takes her down* ~~R.~~) L.

VICAR. There's been a tragedy.

GRISELDA. What's happened ?

VICAR. Come and sit down. You must be tired. Now don't worry.

MARPLE (*moving to* R. *of the* INSPECTOR). Inspector—I . . .

(DENNIS *enters through the french windows and stands just inside the room.*)

INSPECTOR (*again ignoring* MARPLE). You've been to London, Mrs Clement ?

(*In turning to the* INSPECTOR, GRISELDA *sees* DENNIS.)

GRISELDA (*hushed*). Why, yes.

(MISS MARPLE *eases up* L.C.)

INSPECTOR. And came back on the five-five ?

DENNIS (*moving* C.). I say—Inspector . . .

GRISELDA (*quickly*). Why yes, of course. (*She catches* DENNIS's *eye.*)

INSPECTOR. That's all right. If you wouldn't mind leaving us . . . (*To* DENNIS.) You get along too, I'll send for you later if I want you.

(LAWRENCE *enters through the french windows.*)

LAWRENCE. Good evening.

INSPECTOR. What do you want, Mr Redding ?

LAWRENCE. Inspector Slack. On the job already, eh ? (*He moves to* R. *of the* INSPECTOR.) The hounds of the law, what ?

INSPECTOR. Where have you been for the last hour, Mr Redding ?

(DENNIS *eases up* C.)

LAWRENCE. Well, I don't think that will be necessary.

INSPECTOR. Well, I do think it necessary, Mr Redding. So perhaps you'll kindly tell me.

LAWRENCE. Tell you where I've been for the last hour ? But really . . .

INSPECTOR. Yes, if you please, Mr Redding.

(GRISELDA *sits in the easy chair down* R.)

LAWRENCE. All right, if you insist. Well, from about six to six-twenty I was talking to the Hendersons—they might be buying one of my oils, jolly nice of them . . .

INSPECTOR. Yes, yes, and then ?

Lawrence. Why, then I came along the path from the village and across the lawn out there to the studio.

Inspector. Did you come near this window ?

Lawrence. Oh, no.

Inspector. Are you sure ?

Lawrence. Quite.

Marple (*moving to* R. *of the* Inspector). That's quite right, Inspector. I saw him.

Inspector. Yes, yes, and when did you *leave* the studio ?

Lawrence. Somewhere between six-thirty and twenty to seven, I'd say. I walked back along the path to the village past Miss Marple's garden.

Inspector. Did you meet anyone ?

Lawrence. No.

Inspector. You didn't come in here through those windows when you left the studio ?

Lawrence. No, I went straight to the village.

Inspector. Are you quite sure ?

Lawrence. Ask Miss Marple.

Marple. Yes, Inspector, that's quite correct. But, Inspector . . .

Lawrence. Miss Marple sees everything.

Inspector. Yes, yes. And later ?

Lawrence. Later ?

Inspector. Yes, later.

Lawrence. Surely you know the answer to that one.

Inspector. If I did I wouldn't be asking you.

Lawrence (*looking at the* Vicar). Then you haven't told him ?

Inspector. Hasn't told me what ?

Lawrence (*moving to the french windows*). So he hasn't. Dear, dear, how stupid of me. Then my only witness was the Vicar ; but for the Vicar . . . (*He turns, pulls out a revolver from his pocket and keeps it nonchalantly trained on the group.*)

Inspector. Where did you get that gun ?

Lawrence. It's mine. It's a Mauser thirty-two millimetre. So the Vicar hasn't told you that he saw me coming out of his front door just as he came in. About a quarter to seven, wasn't it ?

Inspector. Did you see him, Mr Clement ?

Vicar. Well, yes, I did, but . . .

Inspector (*moving to* Lawrence). Give me that gun.

Lawrence (*slightly nasty*). Don't take that tone with me. This gun is loaded—except that one bullet is missing.

Griselda. Oh !

Lawrence (*to the* Inspector). So keep back. (*To* Griselda.) Yes, my dear Griselda, I killed him. He got what he deserved, and I don't regret it. I would have got away with it if I hadn't met your husband on the doorstep. Damn bad luck, wasn't it ?

Inspector. I must warn you that anything you say will be taken down and may be used in evidence at your trial.

LAWRENCE. Really, Inspector ! You sound like a detective thriller. I must say you all look terribly scared. You needn't, you know. One murder is quite enough for the present. (*He tosses the revolver to the* INSPECTOR.)

The INSPECTOR *catches the revolver as—*

the CURTAIN *falls.*

SCENE 3

SCENE.—*The same. Thursday morning.*

The body and the desk chair have been removed. A low coffee table is set L.C.

When the CURTAIN *rises,* LETTICE *is by the fireplace. She moves below the sofa, then to the table above it. She is looking for something. The* VICAR *enters* L. *He carries a pile of unopened letters.*

ENTER

VICAR. Hello, Lettice. What are you doing here ?

LETTICE. I was just out for a walk.

VICAR (*moving up* L.C.). I shouldn't have thought you'd want to come here. (*He carries the small chair from* L. *of the french windows and places it at the desk.*)

LETTICE. Why not ? You mean because of father. Why should it worry me ? I didn't like him very much. It's odd, though . . .

VICAR. What is ? (*He sits at the desk and starts to open the letters.*)

LETTICE. I never thought anyone would *murder* him. Lots of people wanted to, I'm sure. (*She perches herself on the* L. *arm of the sofa.*) I wanted to myself—quite often.

(DENNIS *enters through the french windows.*)

VICAR (*sharply*). Lettice !

LETTICE (*with a wealth of meaning in her voice*). Hello, Dennis. Neglecting the piggy-wiggies and moo-cows this morning ?

DENNIS. Well, I could hardly . . .

(*The* VICAR *is engrossed in his letters.*)

LETTICE. Poor Mr Clement ! It must have been a nasty surprise for you finding father like that. Of course, I didn't know about it for ages.

VICAR. But weren't you told at once ?

LETTICE. I was out. (*She gives a side glance at* DENNIS.) Can't remember what time I got home. It's infuriating, isn't it, when you make a date and someone doesn't keep it ?

(DENNIS *gets more and more uncomfortable as* LETTICE *continues to crack at him with double meanings.*)

VICAR (*not really listening*). Most annoying.

LETTICE. That's really why I went to the pictures at Yenminster—by myself—to recover my temper.

VICAR (*not understanding at all*). I see.

LETTICE. Taking this afternoon off too, Dennis ?

DENNIS (*stuttering*). Yes. Of course not. I don't really know . . .

LETTICE (*cutting in*). I met the Inspector just now. He asked me where I'd been yesterday evening. If I'd had a date with anyone.

VICAR. I'm afraid in a case like this they want to know the whereabouts of everyone.

LETTICE (*rising and moving to the easy chair down* R.). Well, I just drifted in to see if you've found my beret—a queer little yellow one. I think I might have left it here the other day.

VICAR. I haven't seen it. Have you, Dennis ?

DENNIS. No.

VICAR. But if it was here I'm sure the Inspector would have found it.

LETTICE. Why the Inspector ?

DENNIS. Oh, he kind of collected all sorts of things.

LETTICE. What a bore. (*She looks under the cushion on the easy chair.*)

VICAR. But will a yellow beret be of much use to you at present ?

LETTICE. You mean mourning and all that ? (*She looks under the sofa cushions.*) I shan't bother. I think it's an awfully old-fashioned idea. (*She moves to the french windows.*) I suppose it was all on account of me and my swim suit. So silly the whole thing. If father had only known—before he made such a shemozzle. I suppose they'll hang Lawrence.

(*She exits through the french windows to* L. DENNIS *watches her go.*)

DENNIS (*at the french windows ; with grudging admiration*). My goodness, fancy her coming here, into this very room. She's got nerve, hasn't she ? Always remember her killing a weasel. You wouldn't get many girls doing that. She doesn't seem a bit upset about her father, does she ?

VICAR. No. A strange child.

(DENNIS *exits through the french windows to* L. *The telephone rings. The* VICAR *picks up the receiver.*)

(*Into the telephone.*) Hello ! . . . Yes, speaking . . . Oh, Mrs Price Ridley . . . No, I don't know where he is. Have you tried the police station ? . . . You have . . . He may call in here. But I'm not certain. What is the trouble ? . . . Oh, I am sorry. I shouldn't worry about it. (*He replaces the receiver.*) Dear, oh dear.

(DENNIS *enters through the french windows.*)

DENNIS (*moving to* L. *of the* VICAR). Uncle, I've just found two footprints in a rose bed. Small ones, too. Not big enough to be Lawrence's. Do you think the Inspector would like to know ?

VICAR. I should think, perhaps, he would.

(GRISELDA *enters* L. *She stands for a moment and reads a postcard that she has in her hand, then picks up the workbasket from the bureau, crosses to the sofa, sits, and starts to darn.*)

DENNIS. It's wizard luck, isn't it, a murder in one's very own study ? Sorry Uncle. Old Protheroe too, who everyone thought was a stinker.

VICAR. Dennis !

DENNIS. Well, have you heard anyone say they're sorry he's dead ?

GRISELDA. I can't see why Lawrence of all people should do a thing like that. What reason could he possibly have ?

DENNIS (*leaning on the chair* C.). He did have a sort of motive, I suppose.

GRISELDA. What, Lettice ! That's ridiculous. If it comes to that, nearly everyone else had a motive. Anne to get the old boy's money. Miss Marple to save her home. And Mary's Mr Archer to keep out of prison . . .

DENNIS (*chuckling*). And Uncle Len to get rid of a tiresome churchwarden.

GRISELDA. All right then, what about your precious Lettice ? She wants money and more freedom than she's allowed already.

DENNIS (*slightly on the defensive*). I think that's a bit unfair . . .

GRISELDA. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make a crack. The whole thing's beyond me. You know, I think I've got a bit of a headache.

VICAR. Well, it's hardly to be wondered at.

DENNIS (*crossing to the door* L.). What a night. Police round all night, cars coming and going, vans . . .

GRISELDA. Oh, Dennis ! Please.

DENNIS (*turning at the door*). Sorry, Grisel. Shall I get you a cup of tea or something ?

GRISELDA (*smiling at him*). I'd love it. Do you think you could get round Mary ?

DENNIS. Sure. She's money for jam where I'm concerned.

(DENNIS *exits* L.)

GRISELDA (*drily*). I don't doubt it.

DENNIS (*off ; calling*). Mary !

GRISELDA. I still can't believe it.

VICAR. It's the suddenness of it.

GRISELDA. It's strange—the Colonel comes to see you, bad-

sc=
ehind
sofa

tempered as usual, as he's done time and time again ; but this time . . .

Vicar. This time he doesn't go away leaving me ruffled and bothered, eh ?

Griselda. No, he's dead. And it's just an ordinary Thursday morning, ordinary except——

Vicar. Except . . .

Griselda. —that Lawrence is caught in a trap. He must die, too. X GG

Vicar. I thought of walking over to the farm. Maybe we can get some eggs. Would you like to come ?

Griselda. Darling, you think a walk to the farm is a cure for all ills.

Vicar. The good earth can cure most things.

Griselda (*rising and moving* c.). You should have been a farmer.

Vicar (*rising and moving to* l. *of* Griselda). Maybe. But today I must concentrate mainly on the parish. I've had telephone calls from practically all the old maiden ladies of the village, most of them in a state of collapse. We'll call on one or two on our way back, shall we ? X D

(*He takes her in his arms and is about to kiss her as* Miss Marple *enters through the french windows.*)

Marple. May I come in ?

Griselda. Good morning, Miss Marple. I do hope yesterday evening wasn't too much of a shock for you ?

Marple. Oh ! People of my generation are well equipped to withstand such unpleasant happenings. Calories, you know.

(Mary *enters* l.)

Mary. It's the doctor. S/T

(Haydock *enters* l. Mary *exits* l.)

Haydock (*to the* Vicar). Good morning. Forgive me, but I wanted to see the Inspector. And when I phoned the police station, they told me he was on his way over here.

Marple. The Inspector coming here ? Oh, good.

(Hawes *enters* l. *He looks around at everyone nervously.*)

Griselda (*crossing to* Hawes). Ronny ! You're very naughty. Mary says you had no breakfast.

Hawes. I had a c-cup of co-coffee. I'm sure I did.

Marple. You seem worried, Mr Hawes. Now I wonder why ? The mystery has been cleared up. The murderer is under arrest.

Hawes. Wh-what do you mean ?

Marple. Nothing. But we can all sleep quietly in our beds, now. Although I must say you didn't sleep very much last night, Mr Hawes.

GRISELDA. Didn't you, Ronny ? I am so sorry.

MARPLE. His light was on practically all night. Very bad in one so young—very bad.

HAYDOCK (*moving to the desk chair*). Oh, I don't know, Miss Marple. I used to read through many a night. (*He turns the chair to face down* R. *and sits.*)

HAWES. I was tor-tormented by the thought of the Colonel. For a sinner such as he to be taken just like that—leaving no word—no last wish. (*He pauses.*) That note of his, Mr Clement ? Said nothing—of interest ?

VICAR. Nothing, my boy. (*He moves to the fireplace and picks up his pipe from the mantelpiece.*) Just to say he couldn't wait any longer.

MARPLE. That, in my opinion, is very odd.

HAWES (*in a high-pitched voice*). Odd ! Odd ! Of course it's odd. Oh—I'm—I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

(*He turns and exits hurriedly* L.)

HAYDOCK. I'm afraid he's a pretty sick man.

MARPLE. Youth is so sensitive and so secretive.

GRISELDA. It just hates being spied upon.

(*She turns and exits* L.)

VICAR. I'm afraid this business has got on her nerves.

MARPLE (*moving to the armchair* C.). I quite understand. This whole matter has bothered *me*, in fact unnerved me, quite a little. (*She sits.*) There are one or two things I *must* tell the Inspector. I'm glad he's coming here ; but I wonder why ?

(*The* VICAR *turns to the mantelpiece and fills his pipe from the tobacco jar.*)

HAYDOCK. I suppose to check up on details.

MARPLE. I suppose so. You know, in a way I'm surprised at Lawrence Redding confessing to the murder.

HAYDOCK. But why ?

MARPLE. Oh, I don't mean I'm surprised that he did the murder. But that he confessed. I should have thought he would—shall we say, have had a run for his money.

VICAR. Well, the fact that he bumped into me on the doorstep made it impossible for him to get away with it.

HAYDOCK (*chaffing* MISS MARPLE). And if he hadn't confessed, I suppose, Miss Marple, we'd all have been suspect ? Eh ?

MARPLE. Not *all*. But, as you know, Doctor, human nature is one of my favourite hobbies . . .

VICAR. In this village you have ample scope for study.

MARPLE. Exactly. Human nature's a fascinating subject. One takes a problem, no matter how small, like the gill of pickled shrimps.

which amused Griselda so much ; or the butcher's umbrella, meaningless as it was, until one's worked on the assumption that the greengrocer was misbehaving with the chemist's wife . . .

(GRISELDA *enters* L. *She carries a bowl of roses, which she sets on the coffee table* L.C.)

ST.

VICAR. Which unfortunately turned out to be true.

MARPLE. It's gratifying to find one's right.

VICAR. You usually are, I believe. (*He lights his pipe.*)

MARPLE. I don't know about that. It would have been exciting, when a real mystery came along, to solve it in the same way.

HAYDOCK. Ah ! But this is murder !

MARPLE (*unperturbed*). After all, Doctor, an anthill is run on the same principle as Stalin runs Russia.

GRISELDA (*moving to* L. *of* MISS MARPLE). Yes, but Lawrence has confessed, and there's nothing you can do. Otherwise, you'd probably start by assuming that Len had embezzled the church funds.

MARPLE (*after a gulp*). Oh no, my dear, I would start by assuming somebody—something quite different.

(MARY *whisks open the door* L.)

MARY. The Brains Trust !

(*The* INSPECTOR *enters* L. *As always, he wears plain clothes.*)

INSPECTOR. Morning all.

(MARY *turns to go.*)

Here—you !

MARY (*turning*). Who—me ?

INSPECTOR. Now are you certain you didn't hear the shot last evening ?

MARY. The shot wot killed him ? Of course I am. If I had a-done, I'd 'ave come in to see who dunnit.

INSPECTOR. There wasn't another shot—I suppose ?

MARY (*blankly*). Another shot ?

INSPECTOR. Any shot—at all.

(*The* VICAR *perches himself on the* L. *arm of the easy chair down* R.)

MARY. Come to think of it, yus, there was. Not a lot of shots, mind you—just one up there in the woods. But then, they're always banging away there.

INSPECTOR. What time was this ?

MARY. What a one you are for time.

INSPECTOR. Come on. What time ?

MARY. Couldn't say, for sure. Well after tea-time ; I do know that.

INSPECTOR. Come, my dear girl, can't you get a bit nearer than that ?

MARY. " Dear girl." Saucy, ain't he ? (*She looks at the others.*)

No, I can't. I've got my work to do, besides, what with one thing and the other, I never rightly know what time it is.

INSPECTOR. Was the shot you did hear—after the Colonel arrived ?

MARY. Yus, Professor Joad, it were. It'd be about twenty minutes to half of an hour, no longer, 'cause Geraldo were playing. Now is that all, because I've got a nice little pheasant in the oven ?

(GRISELDA *tries to shush* MARY.)

INSPECTOR. That's all right. You can go

MARY. The wind's all wrong for the stove today.

(*She exits* L. *There is an awkward pause as they all realize that the occupants of the Vicarage should not be eating pheasant* GRISELDA *moves to the sofa and sits.*)

GRISELDA. Pheasant. (*To the* VICAR.) I didn't know we were having a pheasant, did you ? Vicar. No

MARPLE. Mary is quite right, Inspector, I heard a shot just before half-past six, but it didn't sound so near.

INSPECTOR (*doggedly*). Well, a shot was fired in here, so someone must have heard it.

MARPLE. Inspector ! I'd like to . . .

INSPECTOR (*moving to* L. *of* HAYDOCK). Have you got the bullet for me yet, Doctor ?

HAYDOCK (*rising*). Yes, here it is, Inspector. (*He takes a bullet from his pocket and hands it to the* INSPECTOR.)

INSPECTOR (*examining the bullet*). Point thirty-two, eh ?

HAYDOCK. Yes, fired from a Mauser all right. I'll keep the technical details for the inquest. All you want to know, I suppose, is that death was instantaneous. Damned fool—what did he want to do it for ? (*He moves above the sofa.*)

MARPLE. Inspector . . .

INSPECTOR (*moving to* MARPLE). Yes, Miss Marple, what is it ?

(MRS PRICE RIDLEY *enters abruptly* L.)

MARPLE. Inspector . . .

(*The* VICAR *rises.*)

MRS PRICE RIDLEY (*to the* INSPECTOR). Ah, there you are ! At last.

SC
PR

INSPECTOR. I got a message you had been trying to contact me.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. I insist that some notice is taken of the occurrence. Disgraceful, I call it. Simply disgraceful. Why, in India even the native police . . .

VICAR. Mrs Price Ridley, won't you sit down ?

INSPECTOR. Yes, murder is disgraceful. Have you any ideas about it ? The motive ?

Mrs Price Ridley (*crossing to the sofa*). Motive ? That's your business. What do we pay rates and taxes for ?

Inspector. We are doing our best, Mrs Price Ridley.

Mrs Price Ridley. The man over at the police station hadn't heard of it until I told him ! (*She sits* L. *of* Griselda *on the sofa.*)

(Griselda, R. *of* Mrs Price Ridley, *continues darning socks.*)

Inspector. What !

Vicar. A little misunderstanding. Mrs Price Ridley had an anonymous telephone call.

Inspector. Oh, I see. We've been talking at cross purposes.

Mrs Price Ridley (*angrily*). Cross purposes, indeed ! Such disgraceful occurrences ought to be prevented. To be insulted on one's own telephone—yes, insulted ! Ever since the war there's been a loosening of moral fibre ; nobody minds throwing away an Empire and as to the clothes people wear . . .

Marple. But change in fashion never worries you, dear Mrs Price Ridley.

Mrs Price Ridley. If this suit was good enough for Karachi . . .

Inspector (*interrupting*). What occurred exactly, Mrs Ridley ?

Mrs Price Ridley. The name is *Price* Ridley. I was rung up.

Inspector. When ?

Mrs Price Ridley. Yesterday evening—about six-twenty-five. I was immediately foully attacked, threatened . . .

Inspector. What actually was said ?

Mrs Price Ridley. I decline to say.

Vicar (*quietly*). Bad language.

Inspector. Oh, so obscene language was used ? (*He takes a notebook and pencil from his pocket.*)

Mrs Price Ridley. Definitely.

Haydock. Could you understand it ?

Mrs Price Ridley. Of course I could. The person became very abusive.

Haydock. Abusive ? Was it a man's voice or a woman's ?

Mrs Price Ridley. It was—a degenerate's voice.

Inspector (*moving to* L. *of the sofa ; impatiently*). Mrs *Price* Ridley—*what was said ?* I can't help you if . . .

Mrs Price Ridley (*taking a deep breath*). " You're a wicked scandal-mongering old woman ! But this time you've gone too far. Scotland Yard is after you for libel ! "

(*The* Inspector *makes notes.*)

Vicar. Naturally, you were alarmed.

Mrs Price Ridley. " Unless you hold your tongue in future, it will be the worse for you—in more ways than one." I roared back : " Who the devil are you ? " And the voice answered, " Mahomet, The Avenger." And then it laughed. Laughed. I felt so angry that my nerves were all on edge, so much so that when I heard a shot I declare I jumped right out of my chair . . .

INSPECTOR (*pouncing*). Where ?

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Where ? In my drawing-room, of course.

INSPECTOR. No, the shot you . . .

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. In my state of fury it sounded just like a bomb, and Clara had to bring me a good stiff whiskey . . .

INSPECTOR. No ! No ! *Where was the shot ?*

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Shot ? Oh, in the woods, of course.

INSPECTOR. Are you sure ?

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Of course I'm sure. Where else do they shoot—except in the woods ?

INSPECTOR. Thank you. What time was all this ?

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Oh, I should think just before half-past six.

INSPECTOR (*giving up*). All right. We'll investigate the incident.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY (*snorting*). Incident !

VICAR. Don't worry, Mrs Price Ridley. The Inspector will look into it for you.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY (*rising and looking sternly at the* VICAR). Very strange things have been happening in this village lately. Colonel Protheroe was going to *look into them*, and look what happened to him. (*She crosses to the door* L. *and turns.*) I shall probably be the next.

her own

(*She exits angrily* L.)

DL

INSPECTOR (*moving* L.). Phew ! All that boils down to is that she heard a shot just before six-thirty.

MARPLE (*smugly*). It also got her away from her front window so that she couldn't see the Vicar's front door at the time of the murder.

INSPECTOR. Eh ? Yes, that's right. Quite right.

MARPLE. And Inspector . . .

INSPECTOR (*to the* VICAR). There are several things I don't quite understand. I'm going to question Mr Redding again—now.

VICAR (*startled*). Now ?

INSPECTOR. With your permission, sir, I've brought Mr Redding over. We want to ask him some questions here on the spot. We're not satisfied with his statement. He is quite willing to help us. (*He opens the door* L. *and calls.*) Jennings, bring Mr Redding in.

JENNINGS (*off ; calling*). Right, sir.

GRISELDA. You mean in here ?

INSPECTOR. If you don't mind, Mrs Clement. (*He moves up* C.)

GRISELDA. I suppose you have your duty to do.

INSPECTOR. Thank you. I shan't need you, Mrs Clement, or Miss Marple.

MARPLE (*rising*). Of course, Inspector. You know best. But have you any other witness who can verify Mr Redding's statement as to his movements between six and seven yesterday evening ? Huh ?

INSPECTOR (*swallowing*). I had forgotten for a moment, Miss Marple, that you were watering your lawn. Perhaps you would be so good as to remain.

MARPLE. Certainly, Inspector. Certainly. I'm only too glad to be able to help.

INSPECTOR. Thank you very much. (*He moves to* L. *of* MISS MARPLE.)

MARPLE. Not at all, dear Inspector. (*She sits in the armchair* C.)

(LAWRENCE, *escorted by* POLICE CONSTABLE JENNINGS, *enters* L., *and moves to* L. *of the* INSPECTOR. JENNINGS *stands by the door* L.)

GRISELDA (*rising and crossing to* R. *of* LAWRENCE ; *impulsively*). Oh, Lawrence, I'm . . .

INSPECTOR. If you don't mind, Ma'am. (*He moves to the door* L. *and opens it.*)

GRISELDA (*moving in to* LAWRENCE *and putting a hand on his arm*). I'm sorry.

(*She crosses to the door* L. *and exits.*)

INSPECTOR (*moving to* L. *of* LAWRENCE). Now, Mr Redding.

LAWRENCE. This is the French way, isn't it ? Reconstruction of the crime on the spot ? Go ahead.

INSPECTOR. You say you quarrelled with Colonel Protheroe, lost your temper and shot him ?

LAWRENCE. Yes.

(HAYDOCK *perches himself on the* L. *arm of the sofa.*)

INSPECTOR. Where was he when you came into the room ?

LAWRENCE. Sitting at the desk.

INSPECTOR. Did he get up when you came in ?

LAWRENCE. Yes.

INSPECTOR. When he was found shot he was in a sitting position.

LAWRENCE. He sat down again as soon as he'd seen—who it was.

INSPECTOR. Oh. Perhaps you'd like to tell me exactly what occurred.

LAWRENCE. I'll—try. I came in through the door here. The Colonel—after getting up—and—sitting down . . .

INSPECTOR. Getting up and sitting down, eh ? Whereabouts were you ?

LAWRENCE. Well, I was there. Then he started to argue with me.

INSPECTOR. Argue—what about ?

LAWRENCE. He—was annoyed about a lot of things. Mainly, of course, that I was painting his daughter's portrait—in a swim suit.

INSPECTOR. Very well, you argued ; and then ?

LAWRENCE. Then he became very insulting—suddenly, I lost control—and shot him.

INSPECTOR. You were arguing with him, then suddenly you moved round behind him and shot him through the back of the head ?

LAWRENCE. No ! Yes. No.

INSPECTOR. And the silencer ? Where's the silencer ?

LAWRENCE (*bewildered*). Silencer ?

INSPECTOR. Yes. No shot was heard ; you must have used a silencer.

LAWRENCE. No, I didn't use one.

INSPECTOR. The barrel was grooved to take a silencer.

LAWRENCE. I brought the gun back from Germany—they were all grooved for silencers—God, what does it matter—I didn't use one.

INSPECTOR. All right, I'll take your word for it. But the story, Mr Redding, of a quarrel just doesn't ring true. I suggest there was no time for a quarrel, that you slipped in through the front door and shot him a few minutes before the Vicar arrived home.

HAYDOCK (*rising and moving down* C.). What do you mean, " a few minutes " ? That's impossible, the Colonel had been dead much longer than that.

INSPECTOR. But you said the estimate was only approximate.

HAYDOCK. Half an hour, twenty-five minutes, but no less. A few minutes ! Why, the body would have been warm when I got to it.

INSPECTOR. But if Redding says he shot Protheroe at six-forty-five . . .

HAYDOCK. Then Redding lies ! Half-past six was the latest he could have been shot. Why, the blood had begun to congeal. (*He moves above the sofa.*)

(ANN PROTHEROE *enters through the french windows. She is white and strained. She wears a tight-fitting dress.*)

VICAR. Mrs Protheroe !

LAWRENCE. Anne !

HAYDOCK. Mrs Protheroe ! What . . . ?

ANNE (*moving to* L. *of* MISS MARPLE). I came to see Inspector Slack. I telephoned the station, Inspector, and they told me—you were here. I want to tell you . . . (*She breaks off.*)

INSPECTOR. If it's anything to do with the—murder, I think perhaps you'd . . .

ANNE (*interrupting*). No, no, you must hear me now. Please don't try to stop me. I want to tell you I killed my husband.

LAWRENCE (*between* ANNE *and the* INSPECTOR). It's a lie !

ANNE. It's quite true.

LAWRENCE. Stop her—she's mad . . .

ANNE. I'm sorry for saying it so bluntly. But I've hated him for a long time. I know all of you had reasons for disliking him, but none of you knew him as I did. He was evil—he made my life a hell. So I killed him.

LAWRENCE. She's crazy. Don't believe her. She's stark, staring, raving mad !

ANNE. I suppose you'll arrest me, now.

INSPECTOR. Mrs Protheroe, Lawrence Redding has confessed to the murder of your husband.

ANNE. Yes, I know. And I know why.

LAWRENCE. Anne, please don't . . .

INSPECTOR. Why should Redding confess if he didn't do it ?

ANNE. Because——

LAWRENCE. Please Anne !

ANNE. —because he's in love with me.

(MISS MARPLE *nods her head with the satisfaction of having a suspicion confirmed.*)

MARPLE. Just so.

ANNE. I suppose he felt, in a way, responsible. It was very brave of him, but very foolish.

INSPECTOR. How did he know you did it ? Did you tell him ?

ANNE. Yes—I told him.

LAWRENCE. It's a lie. She never told me.

ANNE (*to the* INSPECTOR). Can't you see, he's still trying to protect me ?

INSPECTOR. If you please, Mr Redding, leave this to me.

(LAWRENCE *turns and moves up* C.)

ANNE. Now that I've confessed, please won't you take me away from here ?

INSPECTOR. Where did you get the revolver ?

ANNE. The revolver ? I'd taken it from Lawrence's cottage.

INSPECTOR. When did you take it ?

ANNE. About a week ago.

INSPECTOR. And you brought it with you to the Vicarage ?

ANNE. Yes.

(MISS MARPLE *coughs.*)

I knew my husband would be here. I knew of his appointment with the Vicar.

INSPECTOR. What time did you come here ?

ANNE. It must have been some time after six—quarter-past—twenty-past, something like that.

INSPECTOR. You deliberately took the revolver from Lawrence Redding's cottage with the intention of murdering your husband ?

ANNE. No—I . . .

INSPECTOR. Well, Mrs Protheroe ?

ANNE. Originally, I meant it for myself. You see, I love Lawrence.

VICAR. You know, I cannot believe that . . .

ANNE (*turning to the* VICAR). You cannot believe that the calm, detached Mrs Protheroe, always in command of the situation, always saying the right thing, should be made of flesh and blood, after all. But please, isn't this enough ? It's so embarrassing having to tell you all these things. We—we couldn't help caring for each other.

INSPECTOR. You say you took the revolver meaning it for yourself, but then you brought it with you to the Vicarage ?

LAWRENCE (*moving down* L. *of the sofa ; abruptly*). Inspector, this is ridiculous. She says she took my gun a week ago. That isn't true. It was there only a couple of days ago—ask Mrs Archer. Ask anyone.

INSPECTOR. Will you please be quiet ? Mrs Protheroe, you say that with the intention of murdering your husband you came to the Vicarage with the revolver ?

ANNE. Yes. My husband had told me that nothing would make him give me a divorce. I knew he would never change his mind. There was a scene—he was vindictive—I got very angry. Yesterday evening I came along the lane into the garden and up to the french windows there. I heard no voices and looked in. I saw my husband . . .

INSPECTOR. He didn't see you ?

ANNE. Oh, no.

INSPECTOR. Well ?

ANNE. Well, I—I shot him.

INSPECTOR. I see. And then ?

ANNE. Then ? Oh, then I went away.

INSPECTOR. And told Mr Redding what you had done ?

ANNE. Yes.

INSPECTOR. Did anyone see you enter or leave the Vicarage garden ?

ANNE. No, I don't think so.

(MISS MARPLE *coughs.*)

(*She gives a quick glance at* MISS MARPLE.) Oh yes, Miss Marple, of course. I talked to her a few minutes, she was watering her lawn.

MARPLE. May I be allowed . . . ?

INSPECTOR. Mrs Protheroe, you say after you saw Miss Marple you passed outside these windows, looked in, saw your husband, and shot him with a revolver you carried.

ANNE. Yes.

MARPLE (*rising ; unable to contain herself any longer*). But that couldn't be so, my dear. You didn't have a revolver when you spoke to me. You weren't carrying a bag or anything, and your dress—curiously enough the same one you're wearing now—is very close fitting, if you'll forgive my saying so—quite impossible to *conceal* anything.

ANNE. Of course I had the revolver.

MARPLE (*quietly*). My dear, you really should not tell such untruths.

ANNE. Are you going to take notice of her ? What does she know about it, anyway ?

MARPLE. I know exactly what you were doing all the time from six till well after half-past.

INSPECTOR. Eh ?

MARPLE. I was watering my lawn.

(ANNE *suddenly sways.*)

ANNE (*faintly*). May I sit down ? I feel . . .

MOVE
A BI

INSPECTOR (*quickly*). Doctor Haydock ! (*He leads* ANNE *to the chair down* L.)

(HAYDOCK *moves to the cabinet up* R., *pours out a glass of water and moves to* L. *of* ANNE. ANNE *sits in the chair down* L. LAWRENCE *makes a move towards* ANNE.)

(*To* LAWRENCE.) You keep away from her. Stay over there. (*He moves* L.C.) Now, Miss Marple.

(LAWRENCE *perches himself on the* L. *arm of the sofa.* JENNINGS *eases quietly up* C. *and stands with an eye on* LAWRENCE. HAYDOCK *attends to* ANNE.)

MARPLE. From five o'clock onwards I was in my garden and from there one cannot help but see everything.

INSPECTOR. You saw Mrs Protheroe ?

MARPLE. Oh, yes.

(ANNE *sips some water, then* HAYDOCK *places the glass on the bureau.*)

INSPECTOR. Why didn't you tell me so before ?

MARPLE. I have been trying to tell you for some time, dear Inspector. But you gentlemen are so dominating that it's almost impossible to get a word in edgeways.

INSPECTOR. Well, go on, go on.

MARPLE. Mrs Protheroe came up to my hedge and spoke to me, she admired my roses. Especially my little china one beside the sundial.

INSPECTOR. What time was this ?

MARPLE. About quarter-past six. I had watched her all the way from the village. She said she was on her way to the Vicarage to call for her husband so they could walk home together. When she left me she went into the Vicarage garden by the back gate.

INSPECTOR. And came across to the house ?

(ANNE *turns and looks at* MARPLE.)

MARPLE. Yes. I saw her turn the corner of the house. She must have only just looked through the french windows, that's all there was time for. I suppose the Colonel couldn't have been here at that time, because she came out immediately. She went across the lawn and down to the studio.

INSPECTOR. And at that moment you heard no shot ?

MARPLE. No, not a sound of any kind.

ANNE. But, Inspector, that *was* when I shot him.

LAWRENCE (*rising*). Inspector !

INSPECTOR. Will you please both be quiet. (*To* MISS MARPLE.) Mrs Protheroe went into the studio ?

MARPLE. Yes. Then Mr Redding came along the lane from the village. When he reached the back gate to the Vicarage, he stopped and looked all around.

INSPECTOR. And how was it he didn't see you, Miss Marple ?

MARPLE. Well, just at that moment I was bending over. Greenfly on my china rose. Most worrying . . .

INSPECTOR. Yes, yes, of course. And then ?

MARPLE. He went through the gate and down to the studio.

INSPECTOR. He didn't come near this window ?

MARPLE. Oh, no. He went straight to the studio. Mrs Protheroe came to the door to meet him and they went inside.

ANNE. But . . .

MARPLE. Just after that I heard the shot which *did sound* as though it came from the woods.

INSPECTOR. Just a minute, though. Let me see. So it means that at the time the only shot was heard, Mrs Protheroe and Lawrence were both inside the studio.

MARPLE. I've been trying to tell you for some time, Inspector.

INSPECTOR (*crossing to the* VICAR). And I suppose there's only one door to the studio ?

VICAR. Yes. And the window doesn't open. Nor the skylight.

INSPECTOR (*turning to* MISS MARPLE). How long did they stay inside the studio ?

MARPLE. About a quarter of an hour. Then they walked back together along the lane to the village.

INSPECTOR. I see. And when they passed you in the lane, Miss Marple, I don't suppose you happened to notice the expression on their faces ?

MARPLE. Yes, as a matter of fact I did. They looked very happy.

INSPECTOR. Not disturbed in any way ?

MARPLE. No, no, just the opposite.

ANNE (*rising ; to the* INSPECTOR). Are you going to listen to a gossipy old maid—who sees everyone for miles around from her blasted garden ? I tell you I killed my husband.

INSPECTOR. Mrs Protheroe, you are lying. When your husband was found shot, he was seated at that desk. That desk is not visible from the window. Yet you did not come into the room.

ANNE (*dazed*). No, but . . .

INSPECTOR. You say you were carrying a gun. But you weren't.

ANNE. Well, I . . .

INSPECTOR. I suggest you are covering this young man. Which is quite unnecessary. Lawrence Redding alleges that he shot your husband at six forty-five. Doctor Haydock informs me that is quite impossible. And previous evidence shows that prior to that Mr Redding was nowhere near the Vicarage. It would seem he is trying to shield you.

ANNE (*moving to* LAWRENCE *and starting to break down*). If you only knew the hell I've been through. I'd rather die myself than have anything happen to you. Oh, darling ! (*She collapses in* LAWRENCE'S *arms in floods of hysterical tears.*)

LAWRENCE. I'm sorry, but what else could I think ? Inspector, don't you think Mrs Protheroe could go now ?

INSPECTOR. Yes.

(LAWRENCE *leads* ANNE *towards the door* L.)

I didn't say you could go, Mr Redding.

(HAYDOCK *and* ANNE *exit* L. MISS MARPLE *moves to the chair down* L., *turns it, and busily sits with her back to the audience, facing* LAWRENCE.)

Now there's no need for further heroics, perhaps you'll tell me what really happened. Why did you come to the Vicarage at approximately six fifty-five ?

(*The* VICAR *sits in the easy chair down* R. *The* INSPECTOR *moves to* L. *of the sofa.*)

LAWRENCE (*moving* C.). All right, Inspector, there's no need to cover up any more. I met Anne in the studio, because I wanted to tell her I'd decided to go away. It didn't seem fair to her to stay. The Colonel wouldn't divorce her. We—we said good-bye. Then I walked back with her along the lane to the village ; after we parted I felt I had to talk to someone who'd understand, so I came back here by the front door, which was open, to see the Vicar. I came into the study. (*He pauses.*) The Colonel was sitting at the desk. I went up to him—touched him. He was dead. I looked down and saw a revolver lying on the floor. I picked it up, it was mine.

VICAR. And thought Mrs Protheroe had done it ?

LAWRENCE. Yes. She'd always had such terrific self-control, but when we fell in love, she changed, did wild impetuous things. You see, Inspector, I don't think she'd ever been in love before. Oh, I know I must have been crazy. But I didn't stop to think, just put the revolver in my pocket and went through the hall to avoid Miss Marple, but I met the Vicar on the doorstep. I remember making some excuse . . .

INSPECTOR. Who else knew that you owned a revolver ?

LAWRENCE. Oh, crowds of people.

INSPECTOR. When did you last see it ?

LAWRENCE. Two or three days ago.

INSPECTOR. Where did you keep it ?

LAWRENCE. Oh, with a lot of odds and ends on one of my bookshelves.

INSPECTOR. You mean you left it lying about carelessly ?

LAWRENCE. I really didn't think about it. It was just there.

INSPECTOR. Do you lock your cottage up when you go out ?

LAWRENCE. Good heavens, no. I've nothing worth stealing.

INSPECTOR. Then it comes to this—almost anyone from the village might have taken the gun ?

LAWRENCE. I suppose so, Inspector.

INSPECTOR. When you came in here, did you notice a note lying on the blotter, half concealed by the body ?

LAWRENCE. No, I didn't.

INSPECTOR. Nevertheless, there was one. And somebody added the time six-twenty to the note *after* the Colonel died.

MARPLE. Added ?

INSPECTOR. We've established the fact that the six-twenty was added later.

LAWRENCE. But six-twenty was the time when Anne passed these windows. Oh, God ! Someone must have seen her, even been in here when she passed. Someone who hated her.

MARPLE. Someone who was trying to pin the murder on to her.

(*There is a pause.* HAYDOCK *enters* L.)

HAYDOCK. Oh, Redding, I think you should go up to Mrs Protheroe, she's asking for you.

LAWRENCE. Oh, thanks. May I, Inspector ?

INSPECTOR (*disgruntled*). I suppose so. There doesn't seem much point in holding you any longer. But don't leave the village.

LAWRENCE (*his old charm coming back*). I won't—thanks.

(*He smiles at* MISS MARPLE *and exits* L.)

INSPECTOR. All right, Jennings. Wait for me in the car.

(JENNINGS *exits through the french windows. The* VICAR *rises.*)

MARPLE (*rising and moving* C.). Gentlemen, I'm very worried.

VICAR
HAYDOCK } (*together*). } Worried ?

(HAYDOCK *moves to* L. *of* MISS MARPLE.)

INSPECTOR. *You're* worried.

MARPLE. Yes, dear Inspector, I am. This is different from the gill of pickled shrimps and the butcher's umbrella. This is dangerous, for as I see it, gentlemen, this cold-blooded murderer is the type who may strike again and— (*she sits in the armchair* C.) again.

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE 1

SCENE.—*The same. The following Sunday. Late afternoon.*

A small tea table has been placed L. *of the sofa, but is not yet laid. The armchair from down* L. *now stands above the coffee table.* ON ✓

When the CURTAIN *rises,* HAWES *is asleep on the sofa. From time to time he restlessly turns his head.* GRISELDA, *in a state of extreme agitation, paces between the french windows and the fireplace. Church bells, pealing for evensong, can be heard softly on occasion. After a few moments, the* VICAR *enters* L. *He is also upset. He crosses to* GRISELDA *at the french windows.* X toG

VICAR. Darling. I got your message. What is it ? (*He moves above the sofa and sees* HAWES.) Is it Hawes ?

GRISELDA (*moving down* C.). Oh, no. He's all right. He often drops off these days.

VICAR. But he looks . . .

GRISELDA. No, it's much worse.

VICAR (*moving to* GRISELDA). Worse ? Have you found out something ?

GRISELDA. Found out something ?

VICAR. About the murder.

GRISELDA. Oh, the murder ! No, it's worse than that.

VICAR. Good heavens ! Tell me. Sit down. Calm yourself now, my dear. What is it ?

GRISELDA (*sitting in the armchair* C.). What do you think ?

VICAR. What ?

GRISELDA (*gulping*). It's Mary !

VICAR (*moving to* L. *of* GRISELDA). Mary ?

GRISELDA. Yes, she's . . .

VICAR. Good gracious—what ?

GRISELDA (*tragically*). She's . . .

VICAR. Well ?

GRISELDA. She's leaving !

VICAR (*brightening*). Oh ! Is that all ? I thought at least she'd murdered the Colonel. (*He moves to the desk and sits.*) XL & SIT

GRISELDA. All ! (*She rises.*) Oh, Len, you just *don't care !* (*She moves to* L. *of the* VICAR.)

VICAR. Well, dear, Mary after all—is rather slapdash.

GRISELDA. Oh, dear ! (*With acute self-pity.*) We'll never find anyone else. I shall have to do the cooking. You just don't know what that means.

Vicar. I'm afraid I do, dear, but it can't be worse than Mary's. Whoever's enticed her from us is going to be rather disappointed.

Griselda. But that's what's so dreadful, *nobody wants her*, it's her feelings.

Vicar. Her feelings ?

Griselda. They're upset because Lettice Protheroe says she doesn't dust properly.

Vicar. She doesn't, but what's that to do with Lettice Protheroe ?

Griselda. Nothing at all—that's why it's so—tragic.

Vicar. Darling—would you like me to—speak to Mary ?

Griselda (*smiling adorably*). Len ! You are an angel. *You* and only you could make her stay.

Vicar (*already regretting it*). All right—I'll see her.

Griselda. My very nicest husband. (*She kisses him.*) Now's your moment, because I must just run down to the village, so I'll send her straight in.

Vicar. What, now ?

Griselda (*moving to the door* L.). Yes, now.

(*She exits* L. *The telephone rings. The* Vicar *lifts the receiver.* Hawes *wakes up. He brushes his hand in front of his eyes as though he sees double.*)

Vicar (*into the telephone*). Hello . . . Yes, speaking . . . No, he's not here, Sergeant . . . That's quite all right. No news of an arrest yet, I suppose ? . . .

(Hawes *rises and moves to the french windows.*)

No. Well, thank you, Sergeant. Good-bye. (*He replaces the receiver, rises and moves to* L. *of* Hawes.) Are you feeling all right, Hawes ?

Hawes. Yes, yes, thank you. Ju-just need a little air to clear my head.

(*He exits through the french windows. The* Vicar *moves to the fireplace.* Mary *enters* L. *She wears an apron over her Sunday clothes.*)

Vicar (*turning*). Oh, Mary ! Er, good afternoon.

Mary (*moving* C.). Hello.

Vicar. My wife tells me that you wish to leave us ?

Mary. That's right.

Vicar. Well . . .

Mary. There's some things as no girl can be asked to put up with.

Vicar. Will you be more explicit, Mary ?

Mary. Eh ? (*She moves above the armchair* C.)

Vicar. Tell me, what has upset you ?

Mary. Tell you that in two words, I can. (*Letting forth.*) People come *snooping* round here when my back's turned ; poking about. And is it her business how often the study's dusted ? If you and the missus don't complain—that's good enough for me, I say.

L step D

VICAR. Of course, but . . .

MARY. Me run off me feet. Reporters back and front. Noospapers on the telephone, and me neglecting me radio. And the kind of questions you get asked. I've never been in a place where they had a murder before—not even in the factory—and then before he's so much as decently buried, that daughter of his comes round and says I don't dust proper. Blasphemous, that's what it is.

X DSC
a to dr

VICAR. Miss Protheroe has been here ?

MARY. I'm telling you ! Found her in here when I come back from taking me Mr Archer's mum a few tit-bits.

VICAR. What did she want ?

MARY (*moving to the* VICAR ; *imitating* LETTICE). Looking for her little yellow bierette. " I ain't seen no bierette," say I. " Oh," says she, " I daresay you wouldn't see it. You don't spend much time doing a room, do you ? "

VICAR. A'hem !

MARY. And *then*—she draws her finger along the mantelpiece and looks at it. As though I had time on a day like this to take down all those ornaments. With the police only unlocking the room last night. It being closed *again* on account of everyone who'd confessed to having done the murder not having done it.

VICAR. Naturally you haven't had much time.

MARY. So I says to her—dignified, " If the Vicar and his Missus are satisfied, that's all that matters." And *she* says : " Ah ! But are you sure they are ? "

VICAR. I see.

MARY. " Are you sure they are " ! A girl has her feelings. I work my fingers to the bone for the missus. And if she wants any new-fangled dishes tried, I'm always ready to risk 'em.

X L M

VICAR. I'm sure you are. Well now, Mary . . .

MARY. But she must have heard something from someone, and if I don't give satisfaction . . . (*She turns and moves down* C.)

VICAR (*interrupting*). Don't you think you have taken offence unnecessarily ? You know, Mary, your mistress would be terribly sorry to lose you.

X L R

MARY (*turning*). I've nothing against the missus ; or against you, sir, for that matter.

VICAR. Thank you. Then don't you think you're being rather hasty ? Come, now.

MARY (*sniffing*). Well, I was a bit upset like—after all that questioning—and missing George Melachrino and his strings.

VICAR. Then I can say it's all right ? You'll stay, Mary ?

MARY (*moving* L.C. ; *sniffing*). Well . . .

VICAR. Please, Mary.

MARY. Well, I don't like upsetting the missus. She's so—so kind of helpless—if you know what I mean.

VICAR. Yes, yes. I know what you mean. Then we'll take that as settled ?

MARY. You're awful persuasive, sir ; you are. (*She moves to the door* L.)

(MISS MARPLE *enters through the french windows. She carries a basket of raspberries.*)

" Masterful," I tells Mr Archer.

(*She exits* L.)

Marple

VICAR. Just a little temporary domestic crisis.

MARPLE. I understand. Ah, Vicar, what a lovely afternoon. (*She moves to the coffee table.*) I just brought your wife some raspberries—large and free from maggots. (*She puts the basket on the coffee table.*)

VICAR. You're very kind.

MARPLE. Not at all.

VICAR. Won't you sit down ?

MARPLE. Thank you. (*She moves to the sofa and sits.*) How is dear Griselda ? How calm she is. The murder happens right here in her very house, and never once has she turned a hair.

[illegible] in Sofa

VICAR. Griselda never lets her mind dwell on the unpleasant. Now that Anne and Lawrence are cleared, she refuses to worry.

MARPLE (*nodding*). Quite right—you know it's the letter the Colonel wrote that worries *me.*

VICAR. Oh, why ? (*He sits in the easy chair down* R.)

MARPLE. If Mrs Protheroe came to the window and thought the room was empty, and she must have done so, otherwise she'd never have risked going to the studio to meet Mr Redding—well then, the Colonel must have already been seated at the desk.

VICAR. Well, yes, of course.

MARPLE. Why then, after he had said he'd wait for you should he be sitting there writing to say he couldn't wait any longer ?

VICAR. Why indeed. Unless, of course, he changed his mind.

MARPLE. Or unless it was another letter altogether he was writing.

(MARY *enters* L., *followed by the* INSPECTOR. *The* VICAR *rises.*)

MARY (*jerking her finger at the* INSPECTOR). The Question Master.

(*She exits* L.)

Good afternoon

[illegible] exchange

INSPECTOR. Afternoon, Vicar. (*He moves* C.) Oh, afternoon, Miss Marple.

MARPLE. Good afternoon, dear Inspector. Any news ?

INSPECTOR (*snappily*). News ? What do you mean, news ?

MARPLE. Poor Inspector, it's getting on your nerves, that's very obvious.

INSPECTOR (*snorting*). Is your wife about, Mr Clement ?

VICAR (*surprised*). My wife ? I'm afraid not, but she'll be back quite soon. Is there anything I can do ? Do sit down.

(Lawrence *enters by the french windows.*)

Inspector. Thank you. (*He sits in the armchair* c.)

Lawrence. May I come in ?

Vicar. Yes, do. (*He perches himself on the* l. *arm of the easy chair down* r.) We haven't seen anything of you this last day or two.

(Lawrence *moves down* l.c.)

Marple. Mr Redding's been taking long walks in the woods. I met him the other afternoon, near Jessops Copse.

Lawrence (*smiling charmingly*). And Miss Marple told me the most fascinating things about fungi. Well, Inspector—still at sea ? It certainly does seem a beautifully thought out crime. No clues—nothing.

Inspector. Not for long—all murderers make a slip sooner or later.

Lawrence. I can't get over the fact that the murderer must have actually been in my house ; perhaps even had a drink with me.

Vicar. Not necessarily ; I expect the entire village knew you had that revolver.

Lawrence. Why should they ?

Vicar. Village folk know everything. They could most probably tell you what kind of shaving cream you use.

Lawrence. Who tells them these things ?

Vicar (*smiling*). Goodness knows.

Marple. Old Mrs Archer who does for you—for one. You know you should never have left that revolver lying about.

Lawrence (*moving to* l. *of the sofa*). Come now, Miss Marple—(*he perches himself on the* l. *arm of the sofa*) I wasn't to know anyone was going to borrow it to bump the old boy off.

Marple. I still think it careless of you. And the least you can do is help the Inspector find out who did borrow it. (*To the* Inspector.) Poor dear Inspector, is it really true that they are sending down a Superintendent from Scotland Yard tomorrow to take over the case ?

Inspector (*giving her a look*). Just where do you get your information, Ma'am ?

Marple. I have my spies. So it is true. Dear, dear. I think it's too bad. They're rushing you—not giving you time. Everyone is so *impatient* these days.

Inspector. That's right—given time . . .

Marple. Never mind, Inspector. We still have today.

Lawrence. This is murder, and the sooner something is done about it the better.

Marple. I think that is a little unfair. Everyone with any motive at all has proved that they were nowhere near the Vicarage at the time of the murder, and you go and spoil any shred of finger-print evidence by picking up the gun. Tch ! Yes, I think it a little unfair.

LAWRENCE. I'm sorry. It's just that I'm perhaps more anxious than anyone to have it cleared up. I can feel the suspicion in the air whenever I appear.

VICAR. Surely not.

LAWRENCE. Oh, yes, padre, unless the real murderer is found, everyone will always think it was me.

INSPECTOR. The doctor's evidence made it quite clear . . .

LAWRENCE. What do people care about evidence ? Especially medical evidence. They should question everyone over and over again—third degree, if necessary—and if the murderer does live around here—he'll need to have pretty strong nerves to stand the strain.

(HAWES *enters through the french windows and crosses to the door* L.)

INSPECTOR. Good afternoon, Mr Hawes.

HAWES (*stopping* L. *of the* INSPECTOR). Oh, Inspector, Marshall the verger tells me you've been questioning him.

INSPECTOR. That's right, Mr Hawes. Just checking on your statement that you didn't leave the church before seven o'clock on the evening of the murder.

HAWES. But does Marshall say I did ?

INSPECTOR. Oh, no. But he mentioned he went up to the tower at six-fifteen to see if one of the bellropes had been mended.

HAWES (*getting worked up*). But I—I met him when I left at seven o'clock. He's lying if he says he didn't see me.

INSPECTOR. He saw you all right. He was down again by then. But he was up in that tower for at least ten minutes.

HAWES. What do you mean ? What are you trying to infer ?

VICAR. Calm yourself, Hawes. The Inspector is just doing his duty.

HAWES. His duty ! His duty is to find the murderer—not try and trick innocent people.

LAWRENCE (*good-naturedly*). Now don't get excited, Ronny. If the Inspector is trying to say that you popped out of the church, came across here, shot the Colonel and popped back—well, that's nonsense because Miss Marple would have seen you, wouldn't you, Miss Marple ?

HAWES. Yes, yes, of course. His duty. I see that. But—who could have done such a dr-dr-dreadful thing ? One would need such a strong motive.

INSPECTOR. That's what we're trying to find.

HAWES. Eh ? Oh yes, of course. The Colonel had enemies. He had a bad reputation on the bench for being severe.

VICAR (*trying to break it up*). He had, perhaps, but . . .

HAWES (*interrupting*). Don't you remember, sir, that very morning the day he was murdered he was telling you about having been threatened by that man Archer ?

VICAR. Now I think of it, so he did.

Inspector. You didn't tell me about these threats.

Vicar. I never gave them a thought.

Inspector. Did the Colonel have anything on Archer that you know of, Mr Clement?

Hawes (*interrupting*). The Colonel knew Archer was a poacher.

Vicar. We all know that, I'm afraid.

Hawes. But perhaps the C-Colonel had caught him red-handed. That's why he wanted to see you.

Vicar. Poaching is no concern of mine.

Lawrence. It seems to me that if that were the case, the Colonel would have mentioned it or written about it.

Hawes. Perhaps he was going to.

Inspector. What do you mean?

Hawes. Perhaps the Colonel was going to write and Archer knew about it.

Inspector. You mean he was writing such a letter when he was killed?

Hawes. Yes—no, well, of course, he wasn't, was he?

Inspector. That, young man, is what I'd very much like to know.

Hawes. B-but you do know.

Inspector. Oh no, the letter the Colonel was supposed to be writing at the desk turned out to be a forgery.

(Miss Marple *catches the* Vicar's *eye.*)

Hawes. You mean . . . ?

Inspector. I mean the Colonel never wrote that letter at all.

Hawes. Well, what about the original letter, then?

Inspector. If we could find that we should most certainly have a very good idea of who the murderer was.

Hawes. Oh yes, of course.

Lawrence. Well, Ronny, you seem to have hit the nail on the head.

Hawes. I didn't say . . . I don't know anything about it. I . . .

Lawrence. Of course—just coincidence.

Hawes (*looking at his watch*). It's getting late—Evensong—I have to get ready.

Inspector. That's all right, Mr Hawes. Off you go.

(Hawes *exits* l.)

Marple. Poor boy, so very excitable.

Inspector. H'mmm! (*He looks after* Hawes.)

Lawrence (*rising*). He does seem a bit upset, doesn't he? (*He moves to* l.c.) I wonder . . .

Vicar. I suppose someone has questioned the fish lad. If the murderer left by the front door, there's a chance he might have seen him.

Inspector. I've questioned him all right. He saw no-one. Of course, if by any chance that rascal Archer did do the job and young Len saw him, I doubt if he'd let on. They're cousins, you know.

MARPLE. But Mr Archer has a cast-iron alibi, dear Inspector.

INSPECTOR. I know ! I know ! But I also know what villagers are. They'll hang together in more ways than one. (*He laughs and rises.*) Well, Mr Clement, I'll be back to see your wife, I just want a word with the doctor.

LAWRENCE. I'll be on my way, too. I wanted to ask Hawes for a book he borrowed when he was at the cottage last week, but no matter. I'll come in later. May I have a word with you, Inspector ?

(LAWRENCE *and the* INSPECTOR *exit* L. *The* VICAR *rises and moves* C.)

MARPLE (*cheerfully*). H'm. So the Colonel *was* writing about something else all the time. I wonder what . . .

VICAR. Something about the murderer, no doubt.

MARPLE (*rising*). Dear Vicar, if you could only find that other letter for me, the real one the Colonel was writing. (*She moves towards the french windows.*)

Rise

VICAR (*smiling*). I'll do my best.

(MISS MARPLE *absentmindedly feels the soil in the plant on the stand.*)

[illegible]

MARPLE (R. *of the plant*). Oh, thank you, Vicar. Quite like old times, isn't it, you and I pulling together. Tch ! Tch ! This plant isn't at all happy. It should be watered every day. Mary attends to it ?

VICAR (*moving to* L. *of the plant*). Yes, as much as she attends to anything.

MARPLE. She's a little raw, isn't she ?

VICAR. She is, but she's all we're likely to get. Strangely enough, she gave us notice today.

MARPLE. Indeed ? I thought she was so fond of you both.

VICAR. I think she is, but Lettice Protheroe seems to have upset her.

MARPLE. That's a very spoilt child. (*She is on her way out when she stops.*) Oh, dear ! (*She turns.*) I have been stupid. Perfectly possible all the time.

VICAR. I beg your pardon ?

MARPLE. Oh ? Nothing. Just an idea that occurred to me.

(DENNIS *and* GRISELDA *enter* L.)

VICAR. Can you tell me what it is ?

MARPLE. Not just yet, dear Vicar, I must go home and—think it over.

GRISELDA. Oh hello, Miss Marple.

MARPLE. Dear Griselda, I just ran across with some raspberries for you.

GRISELDA. Oh, how kind—you're not going—stay and have some tea with us.

MARPLE. No thank you, my dear. I had mine half an hour ago.

GRISELDA. Oh—well, how's the private detective agency going ? Any clues yet ?

MARPLE (*to the* VICAR). Dear Griselda, she will have her little joke. Well, I flatter myself I'm—how shall I say—putting two and two together.

DENNIS. Gosh ! Don't let the Inspector hear you, he'll be furious.

MARPLE. Ah, the Inspector and I work on different lines, Dennis. He looks for clues in facts—while I look for them in human nature. Good afternoon.

(*She exits through the french windows, to* L. ~~*The* VICAR *sits at the desk.*~~)

GRISELDA (*moving to the french windows and looking off* L.). Dear Miss Marple, she certainly is an old busybody. Well, Len, tell me the worst. (*She moves to* R. *of the* VICAR.)

VICAR. The worst ? What about ?

(DENNIS *moves to the sofa and sits.*)

GRISELDA. Mary, of course.

VICAR. Oh, she's staying.

GRISELDA. Oh, Len, how wonderful, you have been clever.

VICAR. I think so, too—she called me "sir"—twice !

GRISELDA. She didn't ! What was it all about ?

VICAR. Lettice's "bierette."

(MARY *enters* L. *She carries a tray of tea.*)

GRISELDA (*seeing* MARY). Er—the Misses Brownriggs are having iron bars fixed on all their windows.

DENNIS. And booby traps dug in the garden. (*He rises and moves to the fireplace.*)

(MARY *crosses to the table* L. *of the sofa, and puts the tray on it.*)

VICAR. Good heavens.

MARY. The doctor's coming up the drive. (*She moves the table a little below the sofa.*)

GRISELDA (*moving to the sofa*). Let him in, Mary, will you please ?

MARY. Oh, he'll find his way in. I leave the door open permanent these days. (*She arranges a cushion for* GRISELDA.) There now, that comfy ? (*She grins indulgently.*)

GRISELDA (*sitting on the sofa*). Very comfy, thank you, Mary.

(MARY *crosses to the door* L. HAYDOCK *enters* L.)

HAYDOCK. Ah, there you are ! Who have you been bumping off today, Mary ?

MARY (*starting*). Eh ? (*Realizing.*) Oh, Doctor, how you do take on. Oh, sir, I do wish that there Mr Pickles would come down 'ere, you wouldn't half give him as good as you got—you wouldn't not 'alf. Give him the money, Barney !

(*She exits* L., *giggling.*)

GRISELDA. A cup of tea, Doctor ? (*She starts to pour out the tea.*)

DSR
SX

HAYDOCK. That's just what I would like. (*He moves to the sofa.*) Well, young man, have they been questioning you yet ? (*He sits* R. *of* GRISELDA *on the sofa.*)

DENNIS. Not yet.

HAYDOCK. The Inspector's been telling me they've traced that Abbott call of yours to the North Lodge of the Hall.

(GRISELDA *gives* HAYDOCK *a cup of tea.* DENNIS *moves to* L. *of the sofa.*)

VICAR. Indeed ? Isn't that the empty one ?

(GRISELDA *gives* DENNIS *a cup of tea for the* VICAR.)

GRISELDA. Yes, they're awfully careless about it, anyone could get in and telephone without being seen.

(DENNIS *moves up* L. *and gives the cup of tea to the* VICAR.)

VICAR. Someone, of course, who knew that the Lodge was vacant.

GRISELDA. In other words—a local.

(DENNIS *moves to the table, picks up the plate of sandwiches and a small plate, and takes them to the* VICAR.)

HAYDOCK. They've also traced the one that upset Mem-Sahib Price Ridley so much.

GRISELDA (*almost dropping a cup*). Oh, no !

DENNIS (*horrified*). Gosh !

(*The* VICAR *takes the small plate and a sandwich.*)

HAYDOCK. And that came from the most surprising place. Lawrence Redding's cottage.

(DENNIS *replaces the plate of sandwiches on the table.*)

VICAR. Good gracious ! But he wasn't there. He was in the studio with Anne.

HAYDOCK. Exactly. All very mysterious. If it hadn't been for the murder it would have just seemed like a practical joke. The Mem-Sahib call, I mean.

Rise
X to C

(GRISELDA *gives a cup of tea to* DENNIS, *who crosses to the easy chair down* R., *and sits.*)

VICAR (*rising and moving down* C. *with his cup and saucer in his hand*). John, if you suspected, if you knew that a certain person was the murderer, would you give them up to the Law ?

HAYDOCK (*after a pause*). What makes you ask that, Padre ?

VICAR. Oh, no particular reason. It's just that with the murder on our minds, I wondered how you'd feel, that's all.

HAYDOCK. I should do my duty. At least—I hope so.

VICAR (*quietly*). The question is, with your theories, what way would you consider your duty lay ?

HAYDOCK. That is a question that comes to most men sometime in their lives—and each man must decide in his own way.

VICAR. But—you don't know. (*He moves to the desk and sits.*) Sit

Cho

HAYDOCK. I don't know.

(MARY *enters abruptly* L.)

MARY. Talk about " Ignorance is bliss " !

(*The* INSPECTOR *enters* L.)

INSPECTOR. Thank you, my girl.

MARY (*giving the* INSPECTOR *a look*). There was a man in " In Town Tonight " who earned his living tying knots in bits of string. I thought he was daft enough. But oh, oh !

(*She exits* L.)

INSPECTOR. She doesn't like policemen, that maid of yours. I hope I'm not intruding, but there's something I forgot when I was here just now. (*He moves* C.) Do any of you recognize this ? (*He pulls* LETTICE'S *yellow beret out of his pocket.*)

(*There is dead silence. The* VICAR *rises. The* INSPECTOR'S *eye goes from one to the other, till it rests on* DENNIS.)

DENNIS (*reluctantly*). It looks like Lettice's beret. (FALSE RELIE

VICAR (*moving down* L.C.). Oh, thank goodness that's turned up at last.

GRISELDA (*guiltily*). Where did you get it, Inspector ?

INSPECTOR. From Mrs Archer. She suddenly thought it might be important. (*He crosses to* DENNIS.) The morning after the murder, she found it in Lawrence Redding's cottage.

DENNIS. Well, why shouldn't it be there ?

INSPECTOR. No reason, I'm sure. But I'll just check up—find out what day she was wearing it; and, if she was in Mr Redding's house on the day of the murder—why.

HAYDOCK (*rising and moving to* R. *of the* INSPECTOR). That's the trouble with murder—all sorts of—other things keep cropping up.

INSPECTOR. You're right there, Doctor.

HAYDOCK. The scandal that's been unearthed in this quiet little village since last Wednesday evening. (*To the* VICAR.) May I use your desk ? (*He puts his cup on the tray, crosses to the desk, and takes some papers from his pocket.*)

GRISELDA (*to the* INSPECTOR). Will you have a cup of tea ? I know it's a bit late. But meals here are always peculiar.

(HAYDOCK *sits at the desk and studies his papers.*)

INSPECTOR (*moving* R. *of* GRISELDA). No thank you, Mrs Clement. I just wanted to ask you a few questions.

GRISELDA. Me ? (*Lightly.*) Well, fire away, Inspector, I'm in the box. (*She puts her cup on the tray.*)

INSPECTOR. On the afternoon of the murder you were up in London, were you not ?

GRISELDA. That's right.

INSPECTOR. What train did you say you caught back ?

GRISELDA. Train ? The five-five, of course.

INSPECTOR. Are you sure ?

GRISELDA. Yes yes, I always catch it.

INSPECTOR. Mrs Clement, the five-five on Wednesday was held up with a breakdown and did not arrive here until well after seven-thirty.

GRISELDA. Well, perhaps I was a bit late.

INSPECTOR. Oh no, you arrived here in this study just after seven.

GRISELDA. Did I ? Well then, I must have caught the earlier train. But I don't remember doing so. Are you sure ?

VICAR. Of course, Griselda, we're sure. We were very conscious of the time that evening . . .

GRISELDA. Oh yes, of course, how silly of me. I caught the four-thirty.

INSPECTOR. But then, you would have been home earlier.

GRISELDA. Earlier ? Oh, but I didn't catch the bus from the station, I walked home.

VICAR. Walked home ?

GRISELDA. Why yes, darling, through the woods. I—needed some air.

INSPECTOR. Did anyone see you ?

GRISELDA. Oh, I'm sure lots of people did. Why, is it so important ?

HAYDOCK (*lightly*). The Inspector is trying to establish your alibi, Griselda.

GRISELDA. Alibi ? Oh, you mean the Colonel ? But how silly, I didn't get home until after you'd all arrived.

RISE
Mantel

VICAR. That's just what the Inspector wants to know, dear.

GRISELDA. Oh dear, how silly. *Me* kill the Colonel ! Why, it's too absurd.

INSPECTOR. Did anyone see you walking home ?

GRISELDA. Now, let me think . . .

DENNIS (*rising ; suddenly*). I did—I saw her—she was . . .

X cup
mantel
pipe

GRISELDA (*quickly*). Oh yes, of course, Dennis—we—met on the tow path . . .

INSPECTOR. The tow path. That's a long way round.

GRISELDA (*lightly*). I don't think there's anything in it. A bit longer perhaps, but much prettier.

INSPECTOR. Where did you meet each other ?

DENNIS. Well, it was . . .

GRISELDA (*quickly*). Oh, just by the willows.

INSPECTOR. The boy got home much earlier than you.

DENNIS. Yes, well, I had my bicycle. I went on ahead.

INSPECTOR (*to* GRISELDA). Is that correct ?

GRISELDA. Oh yes, yes of course.

INSPECTOR. Well, in future, Mrs Clement, you must be more careful with your facts.

GRISELDA. I will indeed, Inspector.

INSPECTOR. Thank you. Now I must be going. (*He moves to the french windows.*) May I go out this way ?

VICAR. Of course.

(DENNIS *stands by the fireplace, looking very worried.*)

HAYDOCK (*rising*). I'll come along, too. Thanks for the tea, Griselda.

(*The* INSPECTOR *and* HAYDOCK *exit through the french windows. The* VICAR *moves to the desk and sits.*)

GRISELDA (*rising*). Now we can finish our tea in peace. (*She collects the* VICAR's *empty cup from the desk.*) Where's Ronny ?

(MARY *enters excitedly* L. GRISELDA *moves to the table.*)

MARY. 'Ere.

VICAR. Well, Mary, what is it ?

MARY. I just thought of something.

VICAR. About the murder ?

(GRISELDA *pours a cup of tea for the* VICAR.)

MARY. Yus.

(*There is a pause.*)

Rise

VICAR. Well, what is it ?

MARY. That evening, I was looking out for Len . . .

GRISELDA (*looking enquiringly at the* VICAR). Len ?

MARY (*giggling*). Oh, not Len the Reverend. Len, the fish boy.

(GRISELDA *gives the cup of tea to the* VICAR, *returns to the sofa, sits and drinks her tea.*)

Leastways, he thinks he's a man because he's seventeen. Thinks he can joke with all us girls. Late he was—well after six o'clock.

GRISELDA. Go *on*, Mary.

MARY. Go on ? Oh, you mean get on with it. Well—as I was just standing by the back door minding me own business, I heard . . .

GRISELDA. What ?

MARY. A sneeze.

VICAR. A what ?

Mary. A sneeze. And don't try to tell me, sir, that I was mistaken.

Vicar. I wouldn't dream of saying so, Mary.

Mary. Because my hearing's the best thing about me.

Griselda. But why shouldn't you have heard a sneeze, Mary ?

Mary (*patiently*). I 'eard a sneeze coming from the direction of the garden, round near those windows there.

Vicar. Well ?

Mary. The *murderer* must have been concealed in the bushes.

Griselda (*after a pause*). Thank you, Mary. You've been a great help.

Mary. You think so ? It were quite a while after I'd shown the Colonel in.

(Hawes *enters* l. *He wears his cassock.* Mary *does not see him.*)

Fancy the murderer sneezing right under my very nose. (*She turns sharply, bumps into* Hawes, *screams and exits* l.)

Dennis. Phew !

Griselda. Oh, Ronny. You haven't had your tea.

Hawes (*moving up* c.). I don't want any tea thank you, Griselda, and it's time I went over to the church. (*To the* Vicar.) I'm looking forward to your sermon, sir. I feel that evensong on Sunday is a very—is a very solemn time.

Vicar (*thoughtfully*). Solemn time, yes. A time when it's easiest to reach people's hearts.

Hawes. *You* can always do that, sir.

Vicar. I ?

Griselda. I know what Ronny means. You seem a different person standing at the altar—apart and yet, very understanding.

Vicar (*smiling*). Aren't I always that ?

Griselda. Oh yes, but this is different. It's hard to explain.

Hawes (*surprisingly*). I understand. Shall I go on ahead, Mr Clement ?

Vicar. Yes, do.

Hawes (*moving to the french windows and turning*). Oh, and I'll see that Willie Simpson does not take his white mice in with him under his surplice.

Vicar. Thank you. (*He studies a letter on his desk.*)

(Hawes *exits through the french windows to* r. Dennis *crosses to the door* l. *and opens it.*)

When did this come ?

Griselda. I don't know. Did you bring it in, Dennis ?

Dennis. No.

XDC. Griselda. Mary must have put it there. Who's it from ?

Vicar (*rising*). Filth !

Griselda. Good gracious. Whatever is it, Len ?

Vicar (*moving down* l.c. *a few steps*). An anonymous letter.

Dennis. What about ?

Vicar. Er—oh, nothing.

Griselda (*rising and moving to* R. *of the* Vicar ; *sharply*). What is it about, Len ?

Vicar. Ridiculous, the whole thing.

Griselda. Len. *What is it ?*

Vicar. It's a malicious attack. Lies, obviously.

(Griselda *takes the letter from the* Vicar.)

Griselda (*reading*). " Why was the Vicar's wife coming out of Lawrence Redding's cottage the evening of the murder ? There's some as would like to know."

Vicar. I wish you hadn't read it. (*He takes the letter from her.*) The whole thing's absurd.

Fol
her

Griselda. It's not—absurd.

Vicar. What do you mean ?

Griselda. Obviously, someone saw us—me.

Dennis. Grisel, I think . . .

Griselda (*sharply*). Dennis, let me deal with my own affairs.

Vicar. You were in Redding's cottage last Wednesday ?

Griselda. Yes.

Dennis. But if you'd . . .

Griselda (*turning on* Dennis). Dennis, if you can't keep quiet—please go.

X

Vicar. Griselda, this is serious. Whatever made you go there, and in Heaven's name why didn't you say so ?

Griselda. Darling, it wasn't important. (*She moves to the fireplace and takes a cigarette from the box on the mantelpiece.*)

Vicar (*moving below the sofa*). Griselda. Once and for all, you must realize we are dealing with—murder. You've just been questioned by the Inspector, and you've deliberately withheld information from him.

Griselda. But, darling, what I was doing has absolutely nothing to do with the murder !

Vicar. You went into Redding's cottage. And it was Redding's gun that was used.

Griselda. I'd have had to be pretty snappy to get all the way here from the cottage, even on a bicycle.

Vicar. Perhaps. But you must not withhold things.

(Griselda *lights her cigarette.*)

Now let's clear it up. What possible reason could you have for going to Redding's cottage ?

X.D.

Dennis (*moving to* L.C.). I say . . .

Griselda. Darling, I've told you it's absolutely nothing to do with the murder.

Vicar. Then what is the explanation ?

Griselda. There isn't one.

VICAR. You do realize that a similar letter is bound to be sent to the Inspector ? You will be questioned by him, and in court.

GRISELDA (*coming to a decision*). Look, darling ! It's just that I went to see Lawrence. I called in on my way home from the station. When I got there he wasn't in, as you well know.

VICAR. Why didn't you tell me ?

GRISELDA. If I'd told you that much—I'd have had to tell you the rest.

VICAR. The rest ?

GRISELDA. You see, I knew Lawrence in the old blitz days, long before I met you.

VICAR. You never told me.

GRISELDA. I know. It all sounds sort of silly now, but I had a crush on him in a rather adolescent way. You know how it was, the thought that one may be dead the next moment, and all that.

DENNIS. I don't believe it—you're only saying this . . .

GRISELDA (*to* DENNIS ; *urgently*). It's quite true, Dennis, really. There was nothing—wrong about it. (*To the* VICAR.) I was silly, Len, but you had so much trust in me that when Lawrence came to live here I felt it might set up a doubt if I told you—I know how things can . . .

VICAR. You don't know me very well, do you ?

GRISELDA (*quietly*). No, I suppose not. But then, I've never known a really good person before.

VICAR. What possible reason could you have for going to Lawrence Redding's cottage ? In a small community like ours your every move is noticed.

GRISELDA. But, darling, it was all so innocent. I just wanted to pop in—talk about old times. You know, darling, it's an awful thing to say, but lots of us—rather miss the war, but we're ashamed to reminisce about it in front of others.

(*The five-minute bell starts ringing.*)

VICAR. But if you don't tell me these things how am I to know ? Darling, I—I love you and I want you to be happy.

GRISELDA (*moving to him*). I know ! And I am happy, never was anyone so happy.

DENNIS (*slightly embarrassed*). Ah, there's the parson's bell.

GRISELDA. Oh dear, so it is. I must get my things. (*To the* VICAR.) Don't forget your notes for the sermon, darling. (*She crosses to the door* L.)

(*The* VICAR *eases* L.C.)

(*She turns.*) Len, you—do understand, don't you ?

VICAR. Of course. (*He moves to the desk.*) Get me my cassock, Dennis, please. (*He puts the anonymous letter on the desk, then takes off his jacket and hangs it over the desk chair.*)

(GRISELDA *and* DENNIS *exit* L. DENNIS *re-enters immediately with the* VICAR'S *cassock.*)

DENNIS (*moving to the* VICAR *and helping him on with the cassock*). You do—believe her, Uncle Len ?

VICAR (*after a pause*). Why do you ask ? (*He picks up his sermon notes from the desk.*)

DENNIS. I—I wish they'd find the murderer. All this not knowing isn't fun, really.

VICAR (*moving to the french windows*). The person who killed Colonel Protheroe will be found, whoever it may be.

Star
go

DENNIS. Uncle Len.

VICAR. Yes ?

DENNIS. Oh, nothing.

(*The* VICAR *exits through the french windows to* R. GRISELDA *enters* L. *She wears a hat and carries gloves, handbag and prayer-book.*)

EXI

GRISELDA (*moving up* C.). Has he gone ?

DENNIS. Yes.

GRISELDA. Dennis.

DENNIS. Yes ?

GRISELDA. That was the first time I ever lied to him.

CURTAIN.

SCENE 2

SCENE. *The same. An hour and a half later.*

When the CURTAIN *rises, tea and the tea table have been removed. The sky is leaden and overcast. There is a distant sound of an organ playing the hymn, " Oh, for a closer walk with God."* LAWRENCE *is pacing impatiently up and down. After a few moments,* ANNE *enters through the french windows. She is dressed in black and wears a hat.*

LAWRENCE. Oh, there you are. I've been waiting for you all through the service. (*He moves to the fireplace.*)

ANNE. I'm sorry, darling. (*She moves down* L.C., *takes off her hat and puts it on the coffee table.*)

LAWRENCE. I thought we'd arranged for you to leave before the end.

ANNE (*moving below the sofa*). It's not over yet. They're still singing the last hymn. Lawrence . . .

LAWRENCE. Well, what's the matter ?

(*The organ stops.*)

ANNE. The Vicar preached the most frightening sermon. I wanted to get away, but somehow—I just had to stay and listen. It was terrifying, I've never heard him preach like that before. He seemed inspired. (*He sits on the sofa.*)

LAWRENCE (*sitting* R. *of* ANNE *on the sofa*). The Vicar's no fool. He was probably taking advantage of the tension in the air. Oh, darling, don't let's talk about it. They'll be back in a minute.

(*They kiss passionately.*)

ANNE. Oh, darling, it's been so long, so long without seeing you. Sometimes I think I'll go mad if I don't see you just for a minute. Why won't you let me come to the cottage ?

LAWRENCE. You know that would be foolish with things as they are.

ANNE. Yes, I suppose so. But I can't stand it much longer. Lawrence, I can't, I can't.

LAWRENCE. Now, darling, stop worrying. Everything will be cleared up, I promise you, and then we'll be free. Free to get away from this blasted village.

(*The sound of the organ* " *Voluntary* " *is heard in the distance.*)

ANNE. I don't think we'll ever be free. I don't think we'll ever get away. If you had felt the hostility around me in church this evening.

LAWRENCE. You're letting your imagination run away with you.

ANNE. Lawrence, you don't understand. After all, he was my husband.

LAWRENCE. Listen, Anne. We love each other. Nothing else matters. You do trust me, you do believe in me, don't you ?

ANNE. You know I do. I love you as I've never loved anyone before. The only time I feel safe is when I'm with you. (*She rises and moves* R.) But, darling, we won't ever be happy, we won't ever get away, I know we won't.

LAWRENCE (*rising and taking* ANNE *in his arms*). Of course we will. We'll have money. We'll travel. We'll go as we've always said and bask in the sun.

(LETTICE *enters through the french windows. She carries a hat.*)

LETTICE. Good idea. Think I'll come, too.

(ANNE *and* LAWRENCE *break apart.*)

ANNE (*startled*). Lettice ! Why have you followed me here ?

(*The organ stops.*)

LETTICE. Well—you *could* have meant it when you said you felt faint. Anyway, the service is over now. (*She moves to the armchair* C.) Phew ! (*She sits.*) I wonder what the Vicar was getting at in his sermon. *I* think he knows who killed father and was trying to get them to confess. I felt quite guilty myself.

Anne. Don't be so silly. Why have you come here ?

Lettice. I have told you. I have to look after my one and only step-mother, don't I ? And if it comes to that, why are you here with Lawrence ?

Anne. You know perfectly well Griselda asked us both to come in for a glass of sherry.

Marple (*off up* c. *to* r.). So pleased to see so many at the service.

Lettice (*rising*). Griselda's evidently asked the old pussies, too. (*She moves up* l.)

(Anne *crosses to* l. Miss Marple *and* Mrs Price Ridley *enter through the french windows. Both wear hats and carry prayer-books, gloves and handbags.*)

Mrs Price Ridley (*moving to the sofa*). I have never seen the church so crowded. (*She sits.*)

Marple. It really was a most remarkable attendance. (*She moves to the coffee table, puts her book down and takes off her gloves.*) But I'm afraid it's due to the unfortunate publicity we've been getting.

Lettice. Did you see the Sunday papers ?

Anne. Lettice !

Lettice. We hit the headlines in every one.

Marple. I did happen to see my Nellie's *News of the World.*

Mrs Price Ridley (*roaring with laughter*). Bet you see it every week.

(Miss Marple *ignores* Mrs Price Ridley, *puts her gloves on the coffee table, and sits in the armchair* l.c.)

Marple (*to* Anne). Your presence in church was an unexpected tit-bit for the sightseers, my dear.

(Dennis *enters through the french windows.*)

Mrs Price Ridley. Thought it damn plucky of you, myself. Snap your fingers at 'em. That's the only way to deal with gaping fools. Always done it myself.

(Lawrence *sits* r. *of* Mrs Price Ridley *on the sofa.*)

Lettice (*moving to* l. *of* Dennis). Hello, Dennis. You never talk to me now, I think you're scared of me.

Dennis		Bosh ! I'm not scared.
Marple	(*together*).	I found the Vicar's sermon most disturbing, Mrs Protheroe. What was your opinion ?
Anne		Well, yes, I . . .
Lettice		I haven't seen you since . . .

(*The* Vicar, *still wearing his cassock, enters through the french windows, followed by* Hawes, *also wearing his cassock.* Hawes *stands above the sofa.*)

ENT

DENNIS (*with relief*). Ah! Here's Uncle Len. Oh, Uncle Len, have you seen Grisel?

to
Dennis

ANNE. She asked us all to come for a drink.

VICAR (*moving* C.). Isn't she here?

DENNIS. No.

LETTICE. I saw her beetling off towards the tow path.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Oh well, one can forgive bad manners when they go with a pretty face. It's when faces get a bit long in the tooth . . . (*She glares at* MISS MARPLE.)

Dcsv.

(LAWRENCE *rises and moves to the fireplace. The* VICAR *takes off his cassock and puts on his jacket. He hangs the cassock over the back of the chair.*)

cassock

MARPLE (*sweetly*). How very right you are, dear Mrs Price Ridley. (*To the* VICAR.) Your sermon, dear Vicar. Most unusual—most surprising. I've never heard you so—eloquent, so . . .

LETTICE. Reminded me of one of those negro preachers in the pictures. You sure got them all emoting.

ANNE. Lettice!

MRS PRICE RIDLEY. Don't hold with emotionalism in church. Don't hold with it anywhere. Seen a demented mob burn down a whole bazaar before now.

(*There is a distant roll of thunder.*)

VICAR (*quietly*). I don't hold with it, either. But I wasn't quite myself tonight.

MARPLE. Poor dear Vicar, *so much* on his mind.

SC
steps

VICAR (*moving* C.). Well, as Griselda's not here, we'd better have some drinks. Ronny, would you attend to them please? They are in that cupboard.

HAWES. Of course, but I'm afraid I know very little about drinks.

LAWRENCE. I'll help you, Ronny. (*He moves to the drinks cabinet up* R.)

(HAWES *smiles gratefully at* LAWRENCE *and moves to the drinks cabinet. They take the decanter and glasses from the cupboard and pour out two glasses of sherry.* DENNIS *moves to the fireplace.* MARY *enters suddenly* L. *Her hair is hanging loose and her hat is half off. Tears are pouring down her face. She flings herself on her knees at the* VICAR'S *feet.*)

MARY (*on her knees*). I never meant to do it. I never really meant to. I couldn't help meself. My Mr Archer's just busting mad with me coming to tell you. But 'e weren't in church this evening. 'E didn't hear you. I got to be forgiven. I got to be.

(*The* VICAR *hoists* MARY *to her feet.*)

VICAR. Mary! Whatever is the matter? Get up. Now, what is it?

MARY. I wouldn't sleep a wink I wouldn't. Not with it on my conscience—not after wot you said, in your sermon. (*She sobs loudly and noisily.*) I never meant to take it. Strewth I didn't. Me Mr Archer's mum does like a bit of colour.

VICAR. What is it ? Control yourself, Mary. What was it you took ? What did you take ?

MARY (*through her tears*). That vase with Torquay on it. Will you forgive me ? Oh, please sir, can you forgive me ?

VICAR (*twinkling*). I think so, Mary, I think so. Now come along. Don't worry about it.

(MARY *is beyond speech. The* VICAR *propels her to the door* L., *and they both exit.*)

Ex

DENNIS. Gosh ! Whatever vase did she mean ?

MARPLE. Surely it's not that vase of yours, Mrs Price Ridley ? The one that turns up at *all* our rummage sales.

(LAWRENCE *hands a glass of sherry to* MRS PRICE RIDLEY.)

(*She rises and moves up* L.C.) Who was it, Mr Hawes, who said: " Somehow, good will be the final goal of ill " ?

(LAWRENCE *offers* MISS MARPLE *a glass of sherry.*)

No thank you, Mr Redding.

(LAWRENCE *takes the glass of sherry to* ANNE.)

Yes, it was a wonderful sermon. I think everyone is a little overwrought. I believe they feel the same way before the monsoon breaks.

MRS PRICE RIDLEY (*gulping her drink*). Not the same feeling at all !

LETTICE. I'd like some sherry please, Lawrence.

(LAWRENCE *moves to the drinks cabinet and pours out a glass of sherry for himself.*)

ANNE. No, Lettice.

LETTICE. Why not ? I do drink, you know. (*She moves down* C.) Why, that day Dennis and I went up to a show in town and had dinner afterwards, we had a whole bottle of champagne, didn't we, Dennis ?

MARPLE. Tch ! Tch !

DENNIS. It was only for a gag. I thought it tasted awful.

ANNE (*to* LETTICE). Champagne ! Really Lettice, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

(LAWRENCE *drinks his sherry and puts the glass on the drinks cabinet.*)

LETTICE. Ashamed. Look who's talking. Winding father round your little finger so he left you most of the money. Suppose he had left it to me. Be a different story, wouldn't it ?

Lawrence (*moving down* R.C. ; *with terrific power behind his words*). I suggest that you keep quiet.

Anne. Take no notice of her, Lawrence. It's one of her joys in life trying to make me lose my temper.

Lettice. Well, I'm quite sure if the money had come to me Lawrence wouldn't be running after you so—passionately. He was keen enough on me until . . .

Lawrence (*interrupting*). Young woman, you're asking for trouble . . .

Lettice (*ignoring* Lawrence ; *to* Anne). The least he could do is stay away from you until everything's cleared up.

Enter

(*The* Vicar *enters* L. *and stands above* Anne.)

Anne. Lettice, be quiet.

Lettice. I won't. You can stand there all calm and self-possessed when other people are around. But it's different when you're alone with him, isn't it ? I've seen some things. Poor silly father, he didn't know what he'd let himself in for when he married you. Why, you're nothing better than a tart !

(*There is another distant roll of thunder.*)

Vicar (*firmly*). Lettice.

Lawrence (*moving towards* Lettice). It's time someone taught you a lesson.

Vicar (*quite quietly*). Lettice !

Lettice (*moving to the french windows*). It's all right, Mr Clement, I'm just going. (*She turns.*) " Foul deeds will rise, though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes."

(*She exits through the french windows to* L. Miss Marple *moves slightly down* L.C. *There is an embarrassed pause.*)

Marple. Dear ! Dear ! Very self-willed.

Anne. I'm terribly sorry, Mr Clement. I don't know what I'm going to do with her. She—she hates me.

Vicar (*easing slightly to* C.). The child should be sent away for a while.

Lawrence (*moving towards* Anne). Come along, Anne, I'll walk home with you.

Anne (*putting her glass on the coffee table and moving up* C.). No, if you don't mind I'll go by myself. (*She turns.*) Please say good-bye to Griselda for me, I'm sorry about all this. I'm afraid the outburst has been brewing for some time.

(*She exits through the french windows.* Lawrence *moves down* L. Miss Marple *moves up* L. *of the* Vicar.)

Mrs Price Ridley (*rising ; to the* Vicar). It's your fault, Vicar. That over-charged sermon of yours. (*She moves* C.) She's in for a lot of trouble with that minx. Girls are a damn nuisance from the day they're born. Well, as Griselda doesn't seem to be putting in an appearance . . . I wonder where the devil she is.

Vicar. I'm afraid I don't know.

Mrs Price Ridley. Well, nothing would induce me to go for a twilight walk by myself at the moment; at least there were only snakes and tigers in the jungle. Take darn good care too, I don't run into any clues ; doesn't do to know too much when the murderer's still at large. (*To* Miss Marple.) *You* should be more careful. (*She puts her glass on the drinks cabinet.*)

Marple (*innocently*). Me, dear Mrs Price Ridley ?

Mrs Price Ridley (*moving to the french windows*). Yes, you. Well, I'm going straight home, and I shall keep to the middle of the road.

Marple (*moving up* c.). One moment, dear Mrs Price Ridley, I'll come with you and see you safely to your front door.

Mrs Price Ridley (*thoroughly taken aback*). Er—thanks.

Dennis (*moving up* c.). I'll come and escort you both.

Mrs Price Ridley. Well, thanks for the sherry.

(*More distant thunder is heard.* Mrs Price Ridley *exits through the french windows with* Dennis *and* Miss Marple.)

Vicar (*moving up* r. ; *worried*). It's getting very dark. (*He switches on the lamp up* r.) I do wish Griselda would come back. I hope she's all right. I wonder if I should ask the Inspector . . .

Lawrence. Maybe . . .

(*The telephone rings. The* Vicar *crosses to the desk, switches on the desk lamp, and lifts the telephone receiver.* Lawrence *moves to the french windows.*)

Vicar (*into the telephone*). Hello ! . . . Who ? . . . Mrs Abbott . . . Yes, it is . . . Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. Of course I'll come . . . Yes, right away. (*He replaces the receiver.*) Poor old Abbott is much worse. Mrs Abbott wants me to go over right away. (*He moves down* c.)

Hawes (*starting*). Mrs Abbott ! Oh !

Vicar. What's the matter ?

Hawes. Are you su-sure it was Mrs Abbott ?

Lawrence. Good heavens !

Vicar (*after a pause*). Come now, if it was the murderer luring me away again, surely he wouldn't use the same name as a decoy. At least, I shouldn't think so.

Hawes. No, no, of course not. But it's strange.

Lawrence. Everybody seems to be a bit strung up this evening.

Hawes (*fingering his collar*). It's very airless. (*He moves round* r. *of the settee and sits on it.*)

Lawrence. The storm is getting nearer.

Vicar (*absentmindedly ; his thoughts on* Griselda). Yes, better take my mackintosh. Well, the farmers want rain.

Lawrence. Farmers always want different weather from what they're getting.

Vicar. They do—don't they ? (*To* Lawrence.) Have another drink, Redding. When Griselda comes in tell her I'll be back as soon as possible.

EXIT

Lawrence. Right.

(*The* Vicar *exits* l.)

Like a drink ? (*He pours out a glass of sherry for himself.*)

Hawes. Eh ? Oh no, thank you.

Lawrence. Don't mind if I do ?

Hawes. No, of course not. (*Despairingly.*) Oh, God !

Lawrence (*moving to the armchair* c.). I really think you ought to have a drink or something. (*He sits.*)

Hawes. My head feels as though it will burst. And the pain in my eyes.

Lawrence. What about one of those tablets of yours ?

Hawes. Perhaps I had better take one. I'll get them. (*He rises and crosses to* l.) I'm afraid I'm not a very tough person. Oh, Mr Clement tells me you were asking for *Keats' Poems* which I borrowed. I'll fetch them.

Lawrence. No hurry. Did you enjoy them ?

Hawes. I found them a little disconcerting.

(*He exits* l. Lawrence *rises and moves to the drinks cabinet. As he does so, he glances out of the french windows.*)

Lawrence. Blast ! (*He puts his glass on the drinks cabinet, moves quickly to the door* l., *hesitates, then sits in the armchair* l.c.)

(Griselda *enters wearily through the french windows. She carries a hat.*)

(*He rises slowly.*) Hello, Griselda.

Griselda (*moving to the sofa*). Oh, hello, Lawrence. (*She puts her hat on the sofa table.*) Good gracious ! Where is everyone ? I thought you'd all be having a drink and a good old gossip.

Lawrence. So we were. Until the sweet Lettice broke up the party by being more than usually unpleasant.

Griselda. Oh, dear ! It was terrible of me. I should have been here. Where is Len ?

Lawrence. Gone over to Abbott's farm. They rang up for him.

Griselda (*starting*). Abbott !

Lawrence. Yes. Scared of another murder ?

Griselda. No—I don't think so. But it is a funny coincidence.

Lawrence (*over eagerly*). Why don't you go after him ? He's only just gone. You'll catch up with him easily.

Griselda (*moving below the sofa*). I'm much too tired. (*She sits on the sofa.*)

Lawrence. Why don't you go and have a rest ?

Griselda. I'll be all right. It was Len's sermon.

Lawrence. Oh, not you, too !

Griselda. I—I didn't like it. I've never known him be like that before. He seemed . . . I don't know—I wanted to think about it, so I went for a walk.

Lawrence. He'd have made a good actor. Where did you go ?

Griselda. Along the towpath.

Lawrence. Oh ! To call on me ?

Griselda. What do you mean ?

Lawrence. Well, the towpath does run right past my cottage.

Griselda. Why should I want to call on you ?

Lawrence (*moving to the sofa*). What about last Wednesday evening ?

Griselda. I see. You mean you got . . . ?

Lawrence. Yes, I got a letter. Did you go to the cottage. (*He sits* L. *of* Griselda *on the sofa.*)

Griselda. Yes, as a matter of fact, I did.

Lawrence. Griselda ! How nice ! You haven't forgotten.

Griselda. There wasn't very much to forget.

Lawrence. Oh, come now. What about that evening when we danced and . . . ?

Griselda. Now stop it, Lawrence. That's all over.

Lawrence. I remember that night—you wore a green dress, and with that hair of yours you looked . . .

Griselda. Now, Lawrence ! It's no use trying your charm on me. You're wasting your time.

Lawrence. But you *did* go to my cottage. You did run the risk of being seen. Surely . . .

Griselda (*rising and moving to the fireplace*). Please Lawrence, don't be silly. I didn't go to see you.

Lawrence. Who did you go to see, then ?

Griselda. I suppose I do owe you an explanation. I didn't want to tell you—or any one, least of all Len, but—well, I went to get Dennis.

Lawrence. Dennis ! Why Dennis ?

Griselda. I found a note from Lettice, asking Dennis to meet her there. I know that little horror is heading for all kinds of trouble, but she's not going to mess up Dennis's life.

Lawrence. So you found them there and broke up love's young dream, eh ?

Griselda. No, Lettice hadn't arrived when I got there, and Dennis was telephoning.

Lawrence. He seems to have made himself thoroughly at home. Of all the cock-and-bull tales . . .

Griselda. It's quite true. It was Dennis who telephoned Mrs Price Ridley from your cottage. He was mad at the things she was saying about Lettice.

LAWRENCE. I see. So he was " Mahomet the Avenger." Well, well, well, and I thought in my humble way . . .

GRISELDA. Oh Lawrence, how could you be so silly ? I think the whole village knows how I feel about Len.

LAWRENCE. You do love that middle-aged husband of yours, don't you ? Life's pretty simple for some people.

GRISELDA. That's just what happened to me when I met Len. Life suddenly became very simple.

LAWRENCE (*rising and moving* L.C.). Well, I suppose I must be off. The Vicar said would you go and meet him if you got back in time ?

GRISELDA. He said that ?

LAWRENCE. He did indeed. I think he's rather worried about you.

GRISELDA. He's very sweet. (*She moves to the french windows.*) You know, I wouldn't tell him for anything in the world, but I really don't deserve him.

(*She exits through the french windows.* LAWRENCE *moves above the sofa, picks up* GRISELDA'S *hat, hides it behind the sofa, then moves to the fireplace and stands with his back to it.* HAWES *enters* L. *He has changed out of his cassock. He carries a book.*)

HAWES. I thought I heard you talking to someone.

LAWRENCE. No. Your nerves are in a state tonight. Did you take a tablet ?

HAWES. I'll take one later. I've brought the box with me. Oh, and here are your poems. What a lovely edition. (*He puts the book on the coffee table.*)

LAWRENCE. Yes, isn't it ?

HAWES. Poetry is a great consolation.

LAWRENCE. Consolation ? I thought you were happy living here.

HAWES (*moving* C.). Oh yes, I'm lucky to be with a man like Mr Clement.

LAWRENCE (*sitting in the easy chair down* R.). You admire him, I gather.

HAWES. Oh yes, he's a fine preacher, and . . .

LAWRENCE. Oh yes, he can preach all right. He had everyone feeling very uncomfortable tonight, by all accounts.

HAWES. Yes, indeed. But then, I'm afraid we are all si-sinners.

LAWRENCE. Yes, I suppose we are, I've never thought about it. Tell me, do you think that if one—repents—confesses—he's cleared in the eyes of God ?

HAWES (*after a pause*). That is what the Vicar was saying tonight. With such eloquence, " Confess, and you are cleared of your guilt." (*He moves to the sofa and sits on it.*)

LAWRENCE. Nice thought, of course. Get it off one's chest once and for all. Quite a relief, I suppose.

HAWES (*bowing his head*). Yes. Tonight I could barely stand it.

LAWRENCE. But on the other hand, if you didn't have to confess, if there was a chance of your not being found out, well, why worry ? Confessing to God is one thing, but confessing to the whole community—well, (*he shrugs*) well, everyone *knows* then.

HAWES. Confessing to God, or the servant of God, would be . . .

LAWRENCE (*a little too quickly*). You mean to the Vicar. (*He rises, gets his drink, and moves to the fireplace.*) Now that's an idea—if, of course, one had anything to confess.

HAWES (*after a pause ; quietly*). You have been so ki-kind to me . . .

LAWRENCE. Not at all. I like you. Except, of course, you make me feel rather a bounder.

HAWES. Me ? Oh, no !

LAWRENCE. Oh yes, you do. (*He puts his glass on the mantelpiece.*) You can't help it, but you do. Your sense of right and wrong, now that's something I haven't got. Your sense of guilt . . .

HAWES. Guilt. Guilt ! That's it. My conscience doesn't give me a moment's peace. The Vicar said : " This night shall thy soul be required of thee." I felt as if I wanted to . . . Oh, I don't know.

LAWRENCE (*perching himself on the* R. *arm of the sofa*). Something's worrying you, isn't there ? Why don't you talk to me about it ?

HAWES. Oh, if only I could.

LAWRENCE (*smiling charmingly*). Well, how about trying ? Come on, now.

HAWES. It's—the ch-ch-church funds.

LAWRENCE (*feigning surprise*). The church funds ?

HAWES. Yes—*that's* what the Colonel was coming to see the Vicar about, the evening he was murdered. He suspected me. I'm sure of that. You see, I took Miss Hartnell's pound note. I've also taken other sums from the church funds.

LAWRENCE. You !

HAWES. Yes. I know everybody makes this same excuse, but I did mean to put it all back. I was expecting some money later on. But I did so want certain books right away.

LAWRENCE. So you shot the Colonel to keep him quiet.

HAWES. Shot the C-C-Colonel ! Oh, no ! Whatever gave you that idea ? I could never shoot anyone. But don't you see, he would have told everyone. I must confess, I must.

LAWRENCE. Confess ? To the Vicar ?

HAWES. Yes, but every time I try—I just can't get the words out.

LAWRENCE. Why not—it's easy.

HAWES. E-e-easy ?

LAWRENCE. Yes, write him a note and leave it on his desk there. He'll be back in a few minutes.

Hawes. But that's cowardly.

Lawrence. Not a bit ! Come on now, get it off your chest, and then we'll go down to my cottage and make some coffee.

Hawes (*rising*). You think so ?

Lawrence. Yes, I do. He would like it better that way.

Hawes (*moving to the desk*). Well, if you think so. (*He sits at the desk.*) I suppose it's all right. (*He pauses.*) I don't know what to say.

Lawrence (*rising*). You know about these things—I don't. I've never had a twinge of conscience in my life. Go on, write down whatever you feel.

Hawes (*holding his head*). My eyes ache so terribly, I can't think.

Lawrence. You'd better take a tablet. (*He moves to* Hawes.) Where are they ?

Hawes. In my pocket. I'm not really supposed to take more than one a day. (*He takes the box of tablets from his pocket.*)

(*There is a distant roll of thunder.*)

And I've already taken one earlier this evening.

Lawrence (*taking the box of tablets from* Hawes). One more won't do you any harm. You can't go on in pain like this. (*He crosses to the drinks cabinet and puts all the tablets from the box into a glass with some water.*) How far have you got ? (*He crosses to* Hawes *with the glass.*)

Hawes. I've just written " I want to confess . . . " But how to say it ; how to let him know . . . I can't think any more . . .

Lawrence. Come, drink this. Come on, down the hatch. (*He hands* Hawes *the glass.*)

(Hawes *drinks.*)

Hawes. It seemed very strong.

Lawrence. That's because I put some soda in it. (*Hurriedly ; to prevent* Hawes *writing any more.*) Tell me, do you like Griselda ?

Hawes. Griselda. It's such a pretty name. She has a purity . . .

Lawrence. You know, I think she likes you.

Hawes. Likes me ?

Lawrence. Yes, I'm sure she does. She was only saying to me . . .

Hawes. She never notices me. She's kind, just kind. I never thought . . . (*His head drops down on to his arms on the desk.*)

(*As soon as* Hawes *is unconscious,* Lawrence *moves to him and reads the note he has been writing. Then he takes another note out of his own pocket and puts it into* Hawes' *coat pocket. He puts the empty box of tablets back on to the desk. There is a sound of footsteps off up* c. Lawrence *hears them, starts, and exits hurriedly* l. *He leaves the glass on the desk.* Miss Marple *enters through the french windows. She has taken off her hat, and put on a cardigan. She* *looks around the empty room in surprise. Then she sees* HAWES *at the desk. She moves to him.* DENNIS *saunters in through the french windows.*)

MARPLE. Well, it looks as if she's not back yet.

DENNIS. Funny, looks like it. Our Ronny having one of his naps ?

MARPLE (*doubtfully*). Yes, so it seems.

DENNIS (*moving to* L. *of the desk*). Goodness, look at his colour. Is he all right ? I'll get Mary.

(MISS MARPLE *looks closely at* HAWES.)

MARPLE (R. *of the desk*). Mary will be out with Mr Archer You'd better get Doctor Haydock.

DENNIS (*moving to the french windows*). Oh, but it's Sunday. Old Haydock's always at the Jamesons' Sunday evenings.

MARPLE. So he is, and they have no telephone.

DENNIS. Just what I was thinking. I'd better go on my bicycle, I'll only be five minutes—I'm off.

(*He exits through the french windows.* MISS MARPLE *feels* HAWES' *pulse, smells the glass, opens the empty box of tablets, then picks up his arm and lets it drop back on the desk heavily. In doing this, she notices the note. She moves his arm and reads the note. Her head comes up and she thinks furiously. She goes to the telephone and is just lifting the receiver when* LAWRENCE *enters* L. MISS MARPLE *slowly puts the receiver down. They face each other warily.*)

LAWRENCE. Hello, Miss Marple !

MARPLE. Hello, Mr Redding. Poor Mr Hawes seems to be suffering from one of his sleeping fits.

LAWRENCE. Oh, dear ! He was all right when I left him. He was starting off on an estimate for the fête. I came back for (*he pauses*) this book of poems (*He picks up the book from the coffee table.*)

MARPLE (*moving to him*). It's a sad illness. Very sad.

LAWRENCE. Well, all we can do is let him sleep it off. So perhaps if we left him alone . . .

MARPLE (*moving to the sofa and sitting at the* L. *end of it*). Oh, I don't think so. I'll wait till someone comes in. Where is the dear Vicar ?

LAWRENCE. Called to the Abbott's farm, I believe.

MARPLE. Indeed !

LAWRENCE (*moving to* L. *of the sofa*). He may be quite a time.

MARPLE (*firmly*). *I'm* staying.

LAWRENCE (*moving to the french windows*). Oh well, in that case I'll say good night, Miss Marple.

MARPLE. And I'd like you to stay too, Mr Redding.

LAWRENCE (*after a pause*). Oh, why ? (*He throws the book on to the table above the sofa and moves to* L. *of* MISS MARPLE.)

MARPLE. There are one or two things I'd like to discuss with you.

LAWRENCE. Really ! Such as ?

MARPLE. Well, for one, the Colonel's murder.

LAWRENCE (*crossing to the fireplace*). Oh, that. I suppose you know who did it, eh ? (*He takes a cigarette from the box on the mantelpiece.*)

MARPLE. Yes, Mr Redding, I think I do.

(LAWRENCE *looks at* HAWES.)

(*After a pause.*) Oh, no. Not poor Mr Hawes there. No, indeed.

LAWRENCE. No. Who then ?

MARPLE. I'm surprised you ask. I would have thought you knew.

LAWRENCE. I ? What nonsense ! If I knew I'd tell the police. Why don't you ? Or perhaps you'd care to enlighten me. (*He sits* R. *of* MISS MARPLE *on the sofa, and strikes a match.*)

MARPLE. Colonel Protheroe was shot by his wife.

(*There is a pause as* LAWRENCE *lights his cigarette.*)

LAWRENCE. That's a damnable thing to say, Miss Marple.

MARPLE (*flinching at the word*). But murder is—er—damnable, Mr Redding.

LAWRENCE (*after a slight pause*). What nonsense ! Why, it was you who proved her innocence.

MARPLE (*holding up her hand*). That isn't quite correct. I said she was not carrying a revolver when she spoke to me that evening on her way to the Vicarage. That was true.

LAWRENCE (*tensely*). Well ?

MARPLE. She found the revolver in here, concealed and waiting for her.

LAWRENCE. Oh no, really ! And where could it have been concealed ?

MARPLE. In that plant which Mary forgets to water. It was hidden there—pushed deep down into the roots—the day before the murder, you know.

LAWRENCE. I don't know ! It's the most ridiculous story I've ever heard. Why, Anne hasn't got the brains to think up such a brilliant idea like that, much less shoot anyone. She hasn't got the nerve . . .

MARPLE (*rising and moving* L.). I quite agree, without some outside pressure. Pressure from fear or—love.

LAWRENCE. Go on, I'm interested.

MARPLE. No, as you say, Anne isn't capable of planning it. No, *you* planned it all. Mr Redding—didn't you ?

LAWRENCE (*after a pause*). That's a very dangerous statement, Miss Marple.

MARPLE (*sitting in the armchair* L.C. ; *after a pause*). I've been watching you very closely for some time. That charm of yours. You switch it on and off too easily. Underneath, you're ruthless. You hid the revolver in the plant the day before the murder, Mr Redding. I think Mrs Price Ridley and I nearly caught you in the act of hiding it.

LAWRENCE. Really, Miss Marple. I'm beginning to be very sorry for you. Because you must be completely out of your mind.

(*Frightened as* MISS MARPLE *is, she is determined to keep* LAWRENCE *with her till someone comes. She glances around from time to time at the french windows and the door* L.)

MARPLE. Oh no, no. You got the Vicar out of the way with the bogus phone call, you planned the murder for a time when you knew I'd be in my garden. All gardeners get down to it after tea. I was to provide *your* alibi, for those vital minutes. Because of the condition of the body, you knew the doctor was bound to testify that the Colonel couldn't have been shot in the few minutes just before you met the Vicar. Yes—it was Mrs Protheroe. She'd been told where the revolver was hidden. You knew the Colonel would be alone. She had merely to slip in through the french windows, take the revolver out of the plant and do the shooting—a matter of two or three seconds. And you knew, too, that I'd see you coming from the village a few minutes later and go straight to the studio.

LAWRENCE (*rising*). And how did you come to work out all this ? (*He puts the cigarette out at the mantelpiece.*)

MARPLE. You made one or two slips.

LAWRENCE. Indeed ?

MARPLE. Firstly, in your story. You said that you and Mrs Protheroe had just met for the last time. Yet, when you passed me on your way to the village, you looked exhilarated, excited ; it didn't make sense.

(LAWRENCE *turns.*)

And secondly, the shot in the woods. Your gun, of course, was fitted with a silencer when Mrs Protheroe used it—no shot had to be heard at that moment, but it was essential that a shot should be heard at about six-thirty, when you *and* Mrs Protheroe were safely inside the studio. You fixed that with this Letco Day Rope we hear so much about these days——

(LAWRENCE'S *face is a study. He moves slowly below the sofa.*)

—which gives off a report like a gun shot at given intervals. They use it for scaring away birds. It's something to do with the right length of fuse rope—set to go off at the right moment. I don't really understand it at all, but you gentlemen are so clever at arranging such things.

LAWRENCE (*after a pause; unconvincingly*). Quite fascinating. Go on. Go on, Miss Marple.

MARPLE (*after a pause*). That day I saw you down near Jessops Copse I had just found this. (*She produces a piece of charred rope with an empty cartridge case attached.*) It is the end of one of these Letco ropes—with just one cartridge attached. It has been discharged. (*She replaces the rope in her pocket.*)

LAWRENCE. I fail to see the connection.

MARPLE. That day in the copse when we had our chat about the fungi, I saw you quite a few minutes before you saw me, and you were looking for something in exactly the place where I found this. *That* is really the first time I began to get suspicious.

LAWRENCE (*after a pause*). You've got it all pat, haven't you?

(*He moves above the amrchair* C., *slowly, menacingly towards* MISS MARPLE.)

MARPLE. Yes, I think I have. Except for the silencer. The "sneeze" that Mary heard, it must have been the very second that Mrs Protheroe slipped through those french windows. I suppose you threw away the silencer before your dramatic "confession"? (*She rises and backs to* L.) A great pity. But clever, Mr Redding. And it was clever, too, your adding the six-twenty to the note, thereby throwing suspicion on Mrs Protheroe in the most deliberately clumsy manner. My suspicions became confirmed when you suddenly became so friendly with poor Mr Hawes. You'd have no time for such a person ordinarily, but you needed someone convicted of the murder, and poor Mr Hawes was the most obvious suspect. So you turned all your charm on to him until now—when you've done your best to kill him.

LAWRENCE (*freezing*). Kill him—what are you talking about?

MARPLE. I observed, Mr Redding, you have given him all the tablets; and who would suspect anything but suicide?

LAWRENCE (*moving to* HAWES). Suicide? You mean he's taken too many tablets. (*He turns to the desk, sees the note and picks it up. He reads.*) "Dear Mr Clement, I want to confess . . ." So it was him after all! Poor devil couldn't bear it any longer, confessed, and then took his life. We must do something—I'll get Haydock. (*He replaces the note on the desk and moves to the french windows.*)

MARPLE (*moving up* L.C. *a few steps*). Supposing that confession refers to the church funds?

LAWRENCE. Church funds?

MARPLE. You knew Mr Hawes was the thief, didn't you?

LAWRENCE. Why should I know?

MARPLE. Because the Colonel would certainly have been writing about the theft when he was murdered.

LAWRENCE. What's that to do with me? What is all this?

You'll be answerable for these accusations. I'm going to get Haydock.

MARPLE. Now if poor Mr Hawes dies, although the evidence I admit is very much against him, he hasn't actually stated that he did the murder. But if the letter the Colonel was writing could be found on him or among his belongings—you see what I mean, Mr Redding ?

LAWRENCE (L. *of the french windows*). Yes, of course—but—if you want further evidence why don't you look for it ?—it's probably in one of his pockets.

(MISS MARPLE *searches with shaking fingers and finds the letter in* HAWES' *pocket.*)

MARPLE. How very, very neat. (*She crosses below the sofa as she reads the letter.*)

LAWRENCE (*moving to* L. *of the sofa*). What is it ?

MARPLE. Just the Colonel's letter. Planted here by the murderer. Mr Redding, you are slipping. Mr Hawes' belongings were thoroughly searched for just this sort of evidence—didn't you know ? Besides, surely the young man would have had the sense to destroy it. Anyone would, unless of course, they wished to keep it and use it for just this purpose. But you have been most ingenious, Mr Redding. Most ingenious. And the fake confessions—brilliant, Mr Redding. And it must have taken a great deal of courage to come back into this room with the Colonel dead at the desk, pick up the gun and the silencer, substitute the forged note, all the time listening for the Vicar.

LAWRENCE (*violently*). Stop it ! (*He speaks with a rising inflection.*) I've had just about enough of this. You're mad, you're crazy, and you're horribly in my way. You'll talk them into believing this madness. This poor fool has confessed, he is dying. (*He leans threateningly towards* MISS MARPLE.) Why didn't you have the sense to leave things as they were ?

(MISS MARPLE *sits on the sofa and shrinks from* LAWRENCE, *really frightened. She huddles into the corner of the sofa.*)

MARPLE (*quickly*). Perhaps Mr Hawes's confession suits me, too. (*She sits on the sofa.*) You had no need to force Mrs Protheroe into becoming a murderess. The Colonel—was already dead when she entered this room. I had already poisoned him.

LAWRENCE. You ? (*He pauses.*) I don't believe it.

MARPLE. I'm not in the habit of lying, Mr Redding.

LAWRENCE. You. You ! But why ?

MARPLE. He had threatened to turn me out of my house. There's a saying that an Englishman's home is his castle.

LAWRENCE. You mean that when Anne came in . . .

MARPLE (*rising ; quickly*). Then she did come in . . . (*She breaks off and recovers herself.*) Why yes, I knew the Colonel's little weakness. I slipped in through those french windows, saying the Vicar had asked me to give him a whisky whilst he waited. *That* was a lie, I'm afraid.

LAWRENCE. But whisky doesn't . . .

MARPLE. I put some weed-killer in it.

LAWRENCE (*still staring*). Then if the police exhume the body . . .

MARPLE. Oh, yes. Admittedly, I killed the Colonel, but so did the two of you. I suggest, Mr Redding, in the circumstances—that in the morning—after we've all slept on it, you persuade Mrs Protheroe, as a token of my welfare work in the village—to make me a gift of my house, and my garden.

LAWRENCE (*after a pause*). You're worse than we are, you'd stick at nothing . . .

MARPLE. Most gardeners are like that, I'm afraid. Plants do so hate to be moved about.

(ANNE *enters through the french windows. For a moment she does not look at the desk.*)

ANNE. Lawrence, thank goodness you're here. Why, Miss Marple. Lawrence, why are you looking . . . (*She sees* HAWES.) Oh, it's Mr Hawes What's the matter with him? (*She moves to* R. *of* HAWES.)

MARPLE. Mr Hawes is dying.

ANNE. Dying?

MARPLE. And he's left a confession saying that he killed your husband

ANNE (*turning*). But he didn't. No. No. (*She turns to* LAWRENCE.) Oh, my God. You've done this. You've killed again.

LAWRENCE. Again? What do you mean? I didn't kill your husband.

ANNE (*moving to* L. *of* LAWRENCE). Oh, I know I fired the shot that killed him, but you planned it all. You planted the gun. And now Ronny Hawes—Ronny Hawes, who's done you no harm . . .

LAWRENCE. Ronny Hawes is dying, leaving a confession . . .

ANNE. You're a real killer. I see it in your face. Oh, let me get out of here.

LAWRENCE (*taking hold of* ANNE *roughly*). Oh no, you don't. You'll stay here with me. We've got to go through with it no matter who dies.

ANNE. I'll tell them everything—I'll confess.

LAWRENCE. Quiet. You will not confess. There is no need for you to confess. It was Miss Marple, Miss Marple.

ANNE. Miss Marple?

LAWRENCE. Yes, yes. She killed your husband. She poisoned him.

ANNE. Poisoned him?

LAWRENCE. Yes, that's what I'm trying to tell you. He was dead when you came in here and shot him.

ANNE. Dead ? Of course he wasn't dead. He was writing. He raised his head just before I shot him.

LAWRENCE. Are you sure ?

ANNE. I'll never forget it, never.

LAWRENCE (*after a pause ; turning, slowly and viciously to* MISS MARPLE). He raised his head, Miss Marple. So he wasn't dead after all. So there was no whisky and no weed-killer, and you didn't kill him after all. It was just a little trick, trying to gain time, hoping that someone would come in. Well, that sort of trick makes me very angry.

MARPLE. I—I was afraid, for the moment you were going to add me to your list of victims.

LAWRENCE. It's not too late for that. (*He takes a revolver from his pocket and points it at* MISS MARPLE.)

ANNE. Lawrence !

ENTE

(*The* VICAR *and* GRISELDA *enter through the french windows.*)

VICAR. Drop that gun, Redding.

LAWRENCE (*backing to the door* L.). Stay over there, all of you. Come over here, Anne, we'll give them a run for their money.

(ANNE *moves behind* LAWRENCE. *The* VICAR *begins to move slowly towards* LAWRENCE.)

VICAR. Give me that gun, Redding.

LAWRENCE. Don't come any nearer, Vicar.

(*The* VICAR *keeps moving towards* LAWRENCE. HAYDOCK *and* DENNIS *enter through the french windows.*)

VICAR. Give me that gun.

LAWRENCE. You're being very foolish. One corpse more or less won't make any difference to me, you know.

(*The* VICAR *continues to move.*)

GRISELDA. Len, be careful.

VICAR. Give me that gun.

LAWRENCE. Well, it's very quixotic of you, very quixotic. (*He takes deliberate aim.*)

(ANNE *hurls herself between the* VICAR *and* LAWRENCE. *There is a shot.* ANNE *slumps against* LAWRENCE *and knocks the gun out of his hand. Then* ANNE'S *body slowly falls to the ground.* LAWRENCE *reels against the bureau and stares at* ANNE'S *body on the floor.* HAYDOCK *moves swiftly down to* ANNE, *and kneels beside her.* GRISELDA *hovers* C. *The* VICAR *picks up the revolver and covers* LAWRENCE.)

DOCTOR. Dead, I'm afraid. Right through the heart. She's beyond my help.

MARPLE. Then see to Mr Hawes quickly, Doctor. Perhaps it was the kindest way after all, Mr Redding. You've been very, very foolish.

(HAYDOCK *rises, moves quickly to the desk, and examines* HAWES. LAWRENCE *makes a violent threatening move towards* MISS MARPLE.)

LAWRENCE. Yes, I've been foolish.

(*The* VICAR *follows* LAWRENCE, *still covering him with the revolver.*)

VICAR. Stand still, Redding.

(LAWRENCE *crosses to the fireplace.*)

GRISELDA (*to* HAYDOCK). Ronny—is he all right?

(*The* VICAR *holds up* LAWRENCE *at the point of the revolver at the fireplace.* MISS MARPLE *crosses to the telephone, lifts the receiver, and dials a number.*)

DOCTOR. Too many of my tablets. He'll be all right. I'm giving him an injection, and I'll get him to hospital.

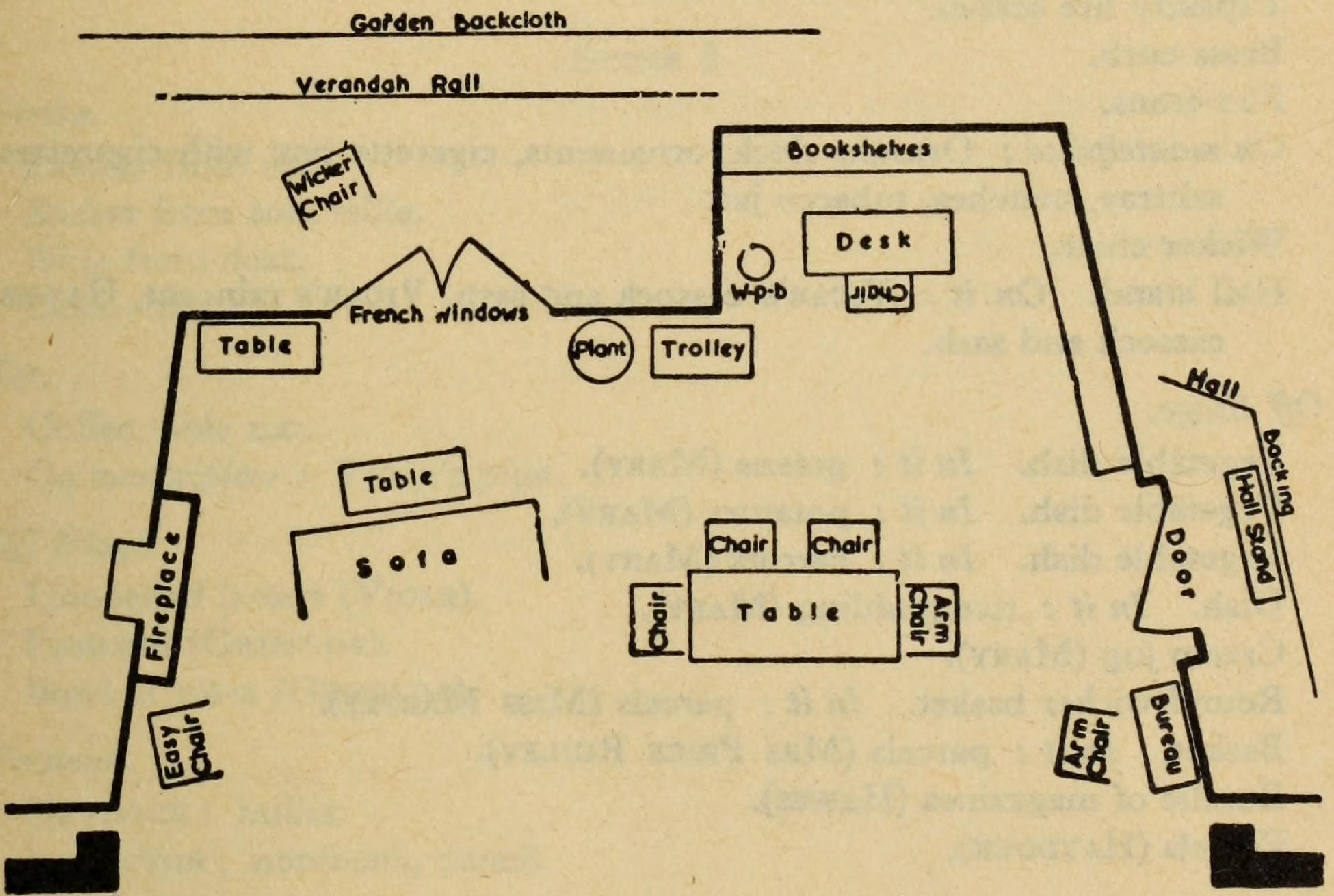
MARPLE (*into the telephone*). Hello . . . Is that Inspector Slack? . . . This is Miss Marple, Inspector. There's been an accident, Inspector, at the Vicarage. Now, you remember the day that I was watering my lawn . . . ?

CURTAIN.

FURNITURE AND PROPERTY LIST.

ACT I

Scene 1


Garden backcloth
Verandah Rail
Bookshelves
Wicker Chair
Desk
Chair
W-p-b
French windows
Table
Plant
Trolley
Hall
backing
Hall Stand
Door
Table
Sofa
Chair
Chair
Chair
Table
Arm Chair
Fireplace
Easy Chair
Arm Chair
Bureau

On Stage.

Desk. *On it :* telephone, desk lamp, inkstand, pens, blotter, letters, ash-tray, matches.

Swivel chair.

Waste-paper basket. *In it :* litter.

Bookshelves. *In them :* books.
On them : silver cups, ornaments.

Bureau. *On it :* bowl of flowers, ashtray, magazines, work-basket. *In the work-basket :* socks, darning wool, needles, darner.

Sofa. *On it :* cushions, magazine.

Easy chair. *On it :* cushions.

Drinks cabinet. *On it :* table-lamp.
In it : syphon, 2 tumblers, 4 sherry glasses, decanter of sherry.

Small rectangular table.

Gate-legged table. *On it :* white cloth, 4 table-napkins, 4 large knives, cruet, 4 forks, 4 small knives, 4 spoons, 4 small forks, 4 small plates, 4 tumblers, carving knife and fork, glass jug with water, 2 table spoons, 4 meat plates with meat, meat dish with meat and dumplings, note by Dennis's plate.

3 small Regency chairs.

Regency elbow chair.

Tub armchair.

Pedestal table. *On it :* plant in brass bowl.
Tea trolley.
Pair of curtains.
Carpet.
2 Persian rugs.
Pictures. (Oil paintings and college groups.
Pair of electric candle brackets.
Tapestry fire screen.
Brass curb.
Fire-irons.
On mantelpiece : Ormulu clock, ornaments, cigarette box with cigarettes, ashtray, matches, tobacco jar.
Wicker chair.
Hall stand. *On it :* VICAR's cassock and sash, VICAR's raincoat, HAWES' cassock and sash.

Off Stage.

Vegetable dish. *In it :* greens (MARY).
Vegetable dish. *In it :* potatoes (MARY).
Vegetable dish. *In it :* carrots (MARY).
Dish. *In it :* rice pudding (MARY).
Cream jug (MARY).
Round wicker basket. *In it :* parcels (MISS MARPLE).
Basket. *In it :* parcels (MRS PRICE RIDLEY).
Bundle of magazines (HAWES).
Parcels (HAYDOCK).

Personal.

DENNIS : watch.
HAYDOCK : box of tablets.
LAWRENCE : sketching block, pencil.
LETTICE : yellow beret.

SCENE 2

Strike.

Parcels from cabinet and chair up R.
Magazine from sofa.
Gate-legged table.
Bowl of flowers.
Chair from up R.
Chair from R. of the gate-legged table.
Box of tablets from mantelpiece

Move.

Tub armchair to C.
Elbow chair down L.

Set.

On drinks table : jug of water, two tumblers.
On desk-blotter : note—" I can't wait any longer."

Off Stage.

Bag. *In it :* hypodermic syringe ; cotton wool (Haydock).
Basket. *In it :* fan (Miss Marple).
Parcels (Griselda).

Personal.

Inspector : watch.
Lawrence : revolver.

Scene 3

Strike.

Parcels from sofa.
Basket from sofa table.
Note from desk.
Desk chair.

Set.

Coffee table L.C.
On mantelpiece : Vicar's pipe.

Off Stage.

Unopened letters (Vicar).
Postcard (Griselda).
Bowl of roses (Griselda).

Personal.

Haydock : bullet.
Inspector : notebook, pencil.

ACT II

Scene 1

Strike.

Workbasket from sofa.
Glass of water from bureau.

Set.

Tea table L. of sofa.
Anonymous letter on desk.
Sermon notes on desk.
Move armchair from down L. to above coffee table.

Off Stage.

Basket of raspberries (Miss Marple).
Tray. *On it :* teapot with tea, basin with sugar, jug with milk, 4 cups, 4 saucers, 4 teaspoons, 4 small plates, plate of sandwiches (Mary).
Lettice's yellow beret (Inspector).
Hat, gloves, handbag, prayer-book (Griselda).

Personal.

Hawes : watch.
Doctor : papers.

SCENE 2

Strike.

Tea things.
Tea table.
Basket from coffee table.
Cup, saucer and plate from desk.

Set. Confession note on desk.

Off Stage. Book of poems (HAWES).

Personal.

MISS MARPLE : gloves, prayer book, handbag. *In it :* Letco day rope
MRS PRICE RIDLEY : handbag, gloves, prayer book.
GRISELDA : hat.
HAWES : box of tablets.
LAWRENCE : note, revolver, blank cartridges.

LIGHTING PLOT.

ACT I

Scene 1

To open.

All lights full up.
Table-lamp off.
Desk-lamp off.
Bright sunshine outside windows.

No cues.

Scene 2

To open.

Lights checked to ¾.
Table-lamp off.
Desk-lamp on.
Dull evening outside windows.

At cue.

Haydock switches off desk-lamp :
Check lights to ½.
Desk-lamp off.

Scene 3

To open.

All lights full up.
Table-lamp off.
Desk-lamp off.
Sunshine outside windows.

No cues.

ACT II

Scene 1

To open.

All lights checked to ¾.
Table-lamp off.
Desk-lamp off.
Sunset outside windows.

No cues.

Scene 2

To open.

All lights checked to ¼.
Table-lamp off.
Desk-lamp off.
Dull evening outside windows.

At cue.—Vicar switches on table-lamp :
Raise lights to ¾.

At cue.—Vicar switches on desk-lamp :
Raise lights to full.

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